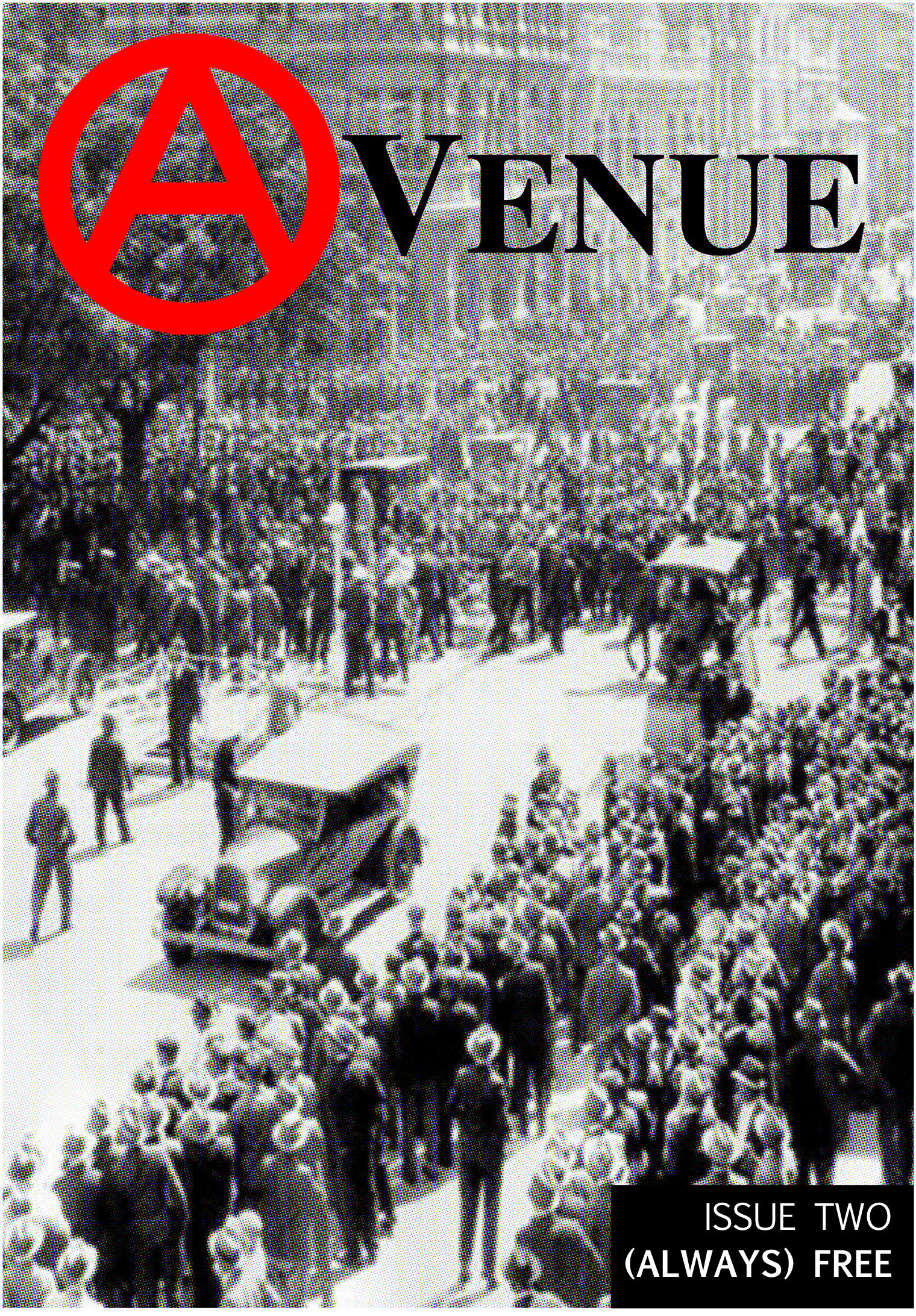


VENUE

ISSUE TWO

(ALWAYS) FREE

We acknowledge the Noongar people as the traditional custodians of the land on which we operate and we support Aboriginal people's struggle for self-determination.

WE AIM TO PROVOKE, EDUCATE AND INSPIRE.
WE SUPPORT COMMUNITY ORGANISATION
WE BELIEVE IN SOLIDARITY, AND DIRECT ACTION.
JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND FREEDOM.
WE BELIEVE THAT ETHNICITY, GENDER, ABILITY, SEXUALITY AND AGE ARE NOT LEGITIMATE DETERMINANTS OF VALUE AND WORTH.
WE OPPOSE ALL FORMS OF HIERARCHY.
WE OPPOSE POLITICAL PARTIES AND BUREAUCRACIES.
WE SEEK INPUT FROM OUR READERS.

Avenue accepts paid advertising at the rate of $495,000 per column centimetre

yours unruly,

UNNAMED
collective

CONTRIBUTE
avenue.perth@gmail.com
PO Box 8187 Hilton WA 6163

DEADLINE for the next issue is 1st August Material will be printed anonymously by request. If you are writing anything longer than 3,000 words, please consult with the editors before submittting.

Cover image: Unemployment riot outside the Treasury Building, the main Western Australian government offices, corner of Barrack Street and St Georges Terrace, 1931. The police had to prevent the rioters attacking the ruling-class Weld Club in Barrack Street, just to the left of this picture. Every single building in this picture was demolished between 1960 and 1980.
Back Cover: Illustration by Liam Dee <www.facebook.com/LiamDeeIllustration>

CONTENTS

ISSUE TWO JULY 2012

Anarchy in W.A.	**4**
The Bird on the Ground	**5**
Hello Ladies	**7**
Introduction to Anarchism Part 2	**8**
Quit Now	**10**
It's Not a Competition	**11**
Birth Choices: Not just about staying alive	**12**
ƆAΣИA : The world turned inside out	**14**
Sweet Nothing	**16**
bitter, bitter	**17**
Silence Is Your Best Friend	**17**
Infinite Possibilities	**19**
Fear and the State	**20**
MoMeant	**20**
Reclaim the Streets!	**21**
Is Communism Just an Idea?	**24**
Kitchen hand/Imp	**30**

DONATE: We appreciate any financial support we receive from our readers. You can deposit directly to our account.

Unnamed Collective
Bendigo Bank
BSB 633 000
Account number 145 456 943

ACTIVATE!

These are some Perth Activist groups we know and support. If you know of others please let us know.

Deaths in Custody Watch Committee
www.deathsincustody.org.au

Refugee Rights Action Network
www.rran.org

Forest Rescue
www.forestrescue.com.au

Industrial Workers of the World
www.iww.org.au

Sea Shepherd
www.seashepherd.org/australia

Ban Uranium Mining Permanently
ufc@ccwa.org.au

Occupy Perth
www.occupyperth.org

Perth Zine Collective
perthzinecollective.com

SEND US YOUR ACTIVIST NEWS

If you are doing something interesting in Perth, let us know. We want your activists' stories as long as they are consistent with our editorial policies.

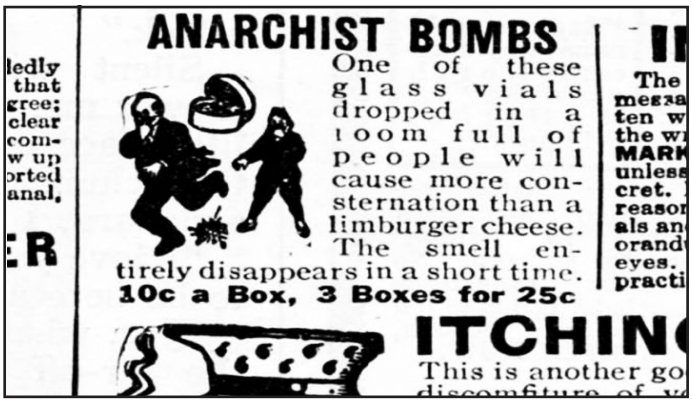
Anarchy in W.A.

Much as I enjoyed Dr Spook's *An Introduction to Anarchism* in Issue One, I found myself thinking as I read it that the language of the article is just not how I think. And yet I identify as anarchist and have done for thirty-five years. I think the problem lies in not directly connecting traditional anarchist ideas to the actual conditions of living in Western Australia in the twenty-first century. Classical anarchism always opposed capitalism and the state, and it is certainly no accident that some of the earliest anarchists were prominent feminists, and vice versa. What I think is needed is to recognise that while capitalism and the state remain the same at their core as they were when Proudhon was alive, important details have changed, and if our analysis doesn't change accordingly, then we will remain stranded by history.

Part of the change is actually a direct result of anarchist and other militant activism. Militant activism has transformed the modern state into something that would have been unrecognisable to nineteenth-century activists. The core of the state, a claim to monopoly on the use of violence, remains the same. Kropotkin wrote that in an anarchist society the only function of the state that would be retained would be the public library. But he was writing in a very different time. When people in Western Australia now think of the state, they are more likely to think of free education, free hospitals, subsidised health care, social security and old age pensions before they think of the police and the army. To put it in a humorous context, I joked with a social democrat friend: When I say, "Smash the state", I don't mean burn down the hospital. Her experience of the state is that her mother supported her on a sole parent's benefit, she got free health care and she could go to university. No-one in her social and economic position could do any of this in Kropotkin's day.

The structure of capitalism has also changed in important ways. When anarchism developed in nineteenth-century Europe it was true that the vast majority of the population were unskilled workers, working hard in dangerous jobs, doing long hours for very little money. That is simply not true in Western Australia. Certainly there is relative poverty here, especially in some vulnerable sections of the population, such as Aborigines and uneducated youth. In nineteenth-century Europe, the proletariat who did all the hard work was the majority of the population. Anarchists were among them every day. That proletariat now barely exists in Perth. Not only are the proletariat who support our standard of living no longer in our street, they are not even in this country: they are in Indonesia, the Philippines, South Korea and China. The inequality that was structured across a city and a country is now stretched across the globe. It is true that capitalist Europe was largely founded on third world slavery, but now the third world is effectively the West's proletariat.

This inequality is reflected in the wealth of the West. A person on the average wage in Western Australia is in the top five per cent of the world's population by income. Even a person on minimum welfare payments here is in the top sixteen per cent. Yet some radicals still propagandise as if almost everyone was only a pay cheque away from starvation. Which brings us to another problem. In nineteenth-century Europe, most people were very poor. Even when I was growing up in Britain in the 60s and 70s, most people were much poorer than we are in Perth now. Even then an anarchist analysis that talked of poverty made sense and could gain traction. But here and now, the biggest problems are overproduction and waste. Again, I am not denying the relative poverty of some people. But very few people in Australia actually go hungry. And most people have a standard of living that would have been almost unimaginable a century ago.


ANARCHIST BOMBS
One of these glass vials dropped in a room full of people will cause more consternation than a limburger cheese. The smell entirely disappears in a short time.
10c a Box, 3 Boxes for 25c
ITCHIN
This is another go

Another problem that affects any anarchist analysis here and now is the cultural profile of the population. The vast majority of the population are either immigrants or the children of immigrants. Large numbers of people who have come to Western Australia in the last two generations are not just run-of-the-mill conservatives, they are people who have come here very specifically and deliberately to get away from the world and politics. Especially, many who came from Britain in the last few decades are racists who came here to get away from multiculturalism. Some of these have even become enthusiastic racist activists here: about a dozen of them are regulars in the Letters to the Editor page in *The West Australian*. They are printed so regularly because they have an enthusiastic readership and a great deal of sympathy from the Perth establishment.

Which brings us to culture. Since the middle of the twentieth century, the power of the capitalist class has become increasingly diffused. Power relations which used to be direct, face-to-face and often violent, are now mostly done through the commodification of culture. You don't need the threat of starvation and a goon squad to keep the population docile if you've got Channel 9.

All of these things affect attitudes to ideas of change. They should also affect anarchist approaches to change. Some of the basics will always remain the same: our communities should take control of what we can, when we can. We oppose and resist oppression however we can. And we must keep reviewing whether our responses are to the actual conditions we live in.

Mar Bucknell

The Bird on the Ground

Adam Rowell

The large bird was dead with one wing turned upward. A hole in its side let the stringy guts out. The upturned wing shielded the head, the beak and the eyes. The other wing lay with feathers fanned but shape mangled. Some red from the hole was on the short green grass. The size of the bird on the ground, at the end of a soccer field, the end near the footpath, where a hole in a wire fence gave view directly onto the body, shocked me. This was not a small or medium sized bird. It was not a common bird: house sparrow, a seagull or a pigeon. It was black but not a blackbird. The dead bird was a very large black bird. It was prehistoric in size. I conjured up in my mind death scenarios. Firstly a drawn out and agonising death which involved several tormentors. Hours spent stalking and coaxing and then finally trapping the bird. A group willing to exploit their premeditated murder by flaunting it in an exhibition of the body. This was replaced by a scene of sudden and accidental demise. I imagined rocks pelted into the trees, the tall timber echoing out across the empty field with each hit. Pieces of eucalyptus branch falling to the ground. A winter's night after school, a couple of friends walking home kicking stones along the way. It's done once, a stone thrown through the air, whistling into the branches. Another is followed by another. The sounds reach for a crescendo and the bombing ceases. Nothing but falling shrapnel in the wake of the attack, pieces of bark, a loose branch, possibly a soccer ball. The culprits are soon in a state of shock, a blunt thud upon the ground. They run. The bird left dying or dead at the end of the soccer field, a sizeable matter leaking innards.

It was huge, disturbingly human in size, but was it dead?

The morning was cold and damp. My ample scarf wrapped tight around my neck and mouth. I was walking to the tram stop. It was a 12 minute walk. Across the bridge over Merri creek, where two figures stood below on the path. The stop was hidden on the corner at the intersection of Moreland Road and Holmes Street. Often I'd watch a tram move past as I reached the corner. I made the walk under a feeling of anxiety. I dreaded the middle part where eventually a cruising tram could lessen the anxiety but confirm the reality of waiting for another. The hole in the wire fence was just past the middle. I stopped at the hole. A large dark matter on the ground. It developed slowly before my watery eyes and spread upon the grass. I wiped my dripping eyes. It was huge, disturbingly human in size, but was it dead? The tram moved past the corner. I began to accept the thing on the ground as dead. I knelt at the hole in the fence. For some reason my thoughts turned to dreams. What if I'd seen the bird in a dream? How would it appear to my waking mind? In symbolic terms the dead bird dream, if one had existed, might have excited the psychic chain between dream and waking. The little notebook beside my bed needed more dreams of that kind. This was not a dream. I assessed the location with a filmic pan of my head. The bird for a second was caught in the far corner of the frame. A peripheral abstract object of size and colour framed by the empty green soccer field. I slowly panned my head back to where the bird was centre again. No, it wasn't a dream.

My fingertips began to tingle. I wasn't wearing any gloves. I stuffed my hands into my coat pockets and immediately felt something foreign. It was rigid and unpleasant. I pulled a dark long feather from the coat pocket. It appeared to be a quill with which to sign a confession. I didn't know where to begin. I'd produced a vital piece of evidence. I floated my head from left to right albeit without the same fluidity. Did I kill the bird, the very large black bird but not a blackbird, had I taken its life? But how could I manage such a feat? Did I do it in self-defence? Impossible to imagine any other scenario in which I'd take the life of a bird? I remembered nothing.

I needed images, words, something, anything, for I had no idea. With the long dark feather in hand, a voice beside me asked if I'd taken the feather from the dead bird on the ground.

'No, oh I've got nothing to do with this,' I said.

'Where did you get the feather from?' the deep male voice asked.

'This feather, it belongs in my pocket.'

Two men stood on either side of me. I looked at the speaker. He looked at me. I looked at the other man and he looked down at the bird.

'You look familiar,' he said.

'I do, that's strange.'

He was young and his eyes, unaffected by the cold — unlike mine which had pouches of liquid seeping from them — were dark.

His friend said, 'I think he done it.'

'What, done what?' I asked.

'Killed the bird,' he said.

'It does look like him,' said the first speaker.

I was examined by both and the validity of the comment assessed. Their eyes snaked between mine and the bird. I grew nervous of their intentions post examination. I lowered my head in submission to the forthcoming verdict. The bird was given a glassy finish due to my watery eyes.

'You did that,' said the first speaker.

'I didn't do anything to the bird.'

'Come and sit down with us, over there on the benches.'

I told them that I had to hurry to get a tram. But I received some gentle persuasion in the form of a touch on my shoulder and a narrowing of the distances between us three. I was invited to sit on a cold wooden bench. 'It happened around 11:30 last night,' the first speaker began the moment my backside touched the wooden surface.

If it moves again, kill it, you said it a number of times, in fact, it was all you said.

Apparently I'd walked across the soccer field alone, stopped suddenly and began talking loudly to no one.

'How do you know this, where were you?'

'We were in the trees.'

'In the trees?'

'We were both in the trees.'

'Why were you in the trees?'

'We like to climb of a night.'

A hypotonic slumber was lifted. I began to recall images. I'd received a signal. The words acted as an antenna. I could see the night before. It was windy and wet. The tall trees sounded like the aged bones of giants. The soccer field was haunted with the arthritic creaks of the wind moving through the branches.

'You said I talked out loud, what did I say?'

'If it moves again kill it, you said it a number of times, in fact it was all you said.'

I didn't remember this but I heard the wind torturing the trees. I smelt eucalyptus floating through a mist of rain and tumbling through my senses.

'What were you both doing in the trees?'

'That's beside the point.'

'Is it?'

'Yes it really has nothing to with what you did.'

'But what did I do?'

'Are we not attempting to find that out?'

'Yes, you're right, so where was I?'

'You were underneath one of the tall trees.'

'There were two dark shapes, were they painted on the tree? No, the shapes moved away from the tall trees and danced like low flying creatures of the night. I was entertained by the two floating above the ground.'

'Why do you think you weren't afraid?'

'They appeared innocent, dancing, fireflies, not sinister like the …'

'The … the black …'

'No, it was not nice, it wanted to hurt something.'

'You, it wanted to hurt you, Joseph.'

'How do you know my name?'

'You're Joseph Barken. I know you.'

'I don't know you or your friend. Actually where did he go?'

'He's gone to examine the bird.'

'I see and what does he hope to discover?'

'To prove without a doubt that you took its life.'

'This is ridiculous. I have to get the next tram.'

'You can't leave.'

'Why?'

'He'll stop you. So I would advise you to sit back down.'

'If you already know I did it then why waste time?'

'For you to have done it we need to hear it from you.'

'I did it, there I said it.'

'No that's not what I mean. You need to describe what you did.'

'I don't understand, what do you want?'

'I just told you, now listen. The wind, remember the wind. The black …'

'The black wind smothered me. I stretched my neck and struggled for air, I hoped my neck would stretch and stretch. But it couldn't. The black wings opened and for a second I saw the full extent of the bird. It was huge. Then it came for me. I had no chance. The black feathers. The wings closed around me, walls of feathers, moving all around me, it was all that existed. The room of feathers was vast. I had to walk a few steps before touching the feather wall.

Things begin but always move toward an end. I was obviously unsure of what would happen next. I knew I was not able to leave. I was imprisoned and the reason remained a mystery. As time moved, I stressed more and occasionally fell against the feather wall. A hard rigid structure like bone, but an elasticity that propelled me away from the wall, unable to leave.'

'When you were imprisoned, did you hear anything outside, like voices?'

'No. I don't remember.'

'Are you positive, even after you accepted your prison, and maybe sat down and calmed a little?'

'Now you're testing me because I have no idea of how long the black wings held me.'

'An hour, two hours maybe any idea at all of how long you were inside?'

'I can't tell you because that's all I know. I was inside.'

'Do you know where you went after?'

'What does that matter, afterwards?'

The second man returned from his examination of the bird on the ground. He refused contact with my face and directed his tense dark eyes at his partner. I turned to see the face of he who received the stare. And he was smiling.

'What's the verdict on how it died … the bird?'

They both walked away from me and stood in close conference.

'I can easily catch another tram.'

The speaker returned leaving the other staring at the tall trees.

'This much is true, you've been inside the bird, the dead one over there on the ground. We believe that much is true.'

At this stage I knew. It was that smell, it had returned. The smell of the kerosene. It trickled down my throat and filled the rooms of my body, wrapping gaseous ribbons of deceit around my milky bones. My search for answers had ended. My vision black, a prisoner to this discovery. This was not a small or medium-sized bird. It was not a common bird. It was black but not a blackbird. The dead bird was a very large black bird. Prehistoric in size. But I'm not alone. I can hear the voices as they examine the enclosure and sometimes it is true that the voices make me dream of the outside. I can see the trees and hear the sound of the wind whistling through the branches. The bird is on the ground and I'm above and not within.

HELLO LADIES!

Hello Ladies

CWA here, that's Concerned Women Anarchists to you! Bev and I would like to introduce to you today the Concerned Women Anarchists Group, CWA.

The girls and I are fed up with the bullying and uselessness of the government and its nasty corporations trying to tell us what to do, I mean we have been around longer than they've been able to tie their shoelaces. Do you mind?

Darn it, we are not putting up with this any longer. We plan to put a stop to this madness, one fruitcake at a time. But you might be asking how do we do this? And yes you're right, fruit cake isn't all we need.

The ladies and I hold cake stalls and radical craftinoons, and you will see us at your local actions. So just come down and tap us on the shoulder if those baddies are picking on you, Dolores has a great pepper spray recipe. To find out about our next craftinoon, join CWA Nanarchists by e-mailing nanarchists@yahoo.com for details. We are up to date with this modern technology and yes that's right we can be found upon bookface: CwaNanarchists.

So look us up and come down in your finest frock for a bit of technical cross stitch and lemonade scones. Me and the girls look forward to seeing you there.

And remember,

DO YOU MIND?

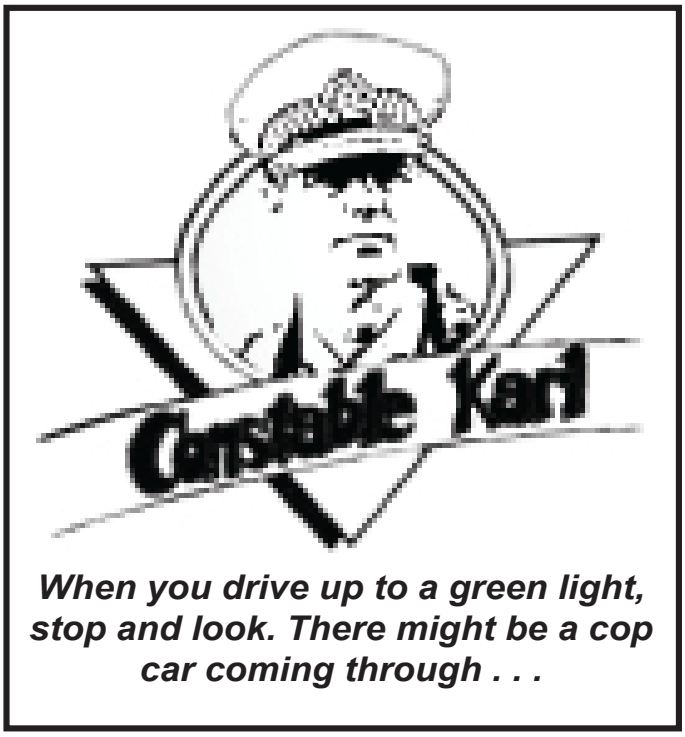
Illustration: ***Citrus Knightshade***

Introduction to Anarchism

PART 2

'There is no horror, no cruelty, sacrilege, or perjury, no imposture, no infamous transaction, no cynical robbery, no bold plunder or shabby betrayal that has not been or is not daily being perpetrated by the representatives of the state, under no other pretext than those elastic words, so convenient and yet so terrible: "for reasons of state"' Mikhail Bakunin, 'Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism', presented as a 'Reasoned Proposal to the Central Committee of the League for Peace and Freedom' in Geneva, September 1867.

Anarchism challenges the conservative idea that authority is essential in order to live in a society. Conservatism is based on the commitment to order and to preventing chaos, and it assumes that human beings are not able to live without authority, hierarchical structures and relationships of power. As an historical result of this 'dogma' and its propaganda, for many people anarchy is synonymous with chaos. The French philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon tried to challenge this notion by affirming that 'anarchy is order'. In *What Is Property?* (1840), Proudhon states that 'Property and royalty have been decaying since the world began. Just as man seeks justice in equality, society seeks order in anarchy. Anarchy, that is, the absence of a ruler or a sovereign. This is the form of government we are moving closer to every day.' The Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta, in his *Anarchy* (1891), suggested that the equation of anarchy with chaos derives from the false belief that a government has always been considered necessary. Therefore the absence of government — or anarchy — has been seen as disorder par excellence. Malatesta argues that it is important to convince people of the following belief: 'Government is both harmful and useless and … with anarchy (in the sense of the absence of government) comes natural order, unity of human needs and the interests of all, complete freedom within complete solidarity.' Certainly not all anarchists share such an optimistic perspective and do not believe in a spontaneous evolution of society into anarchy. On the contrary, for many activists anarchism implies a continuous revolution, a conscious act of rebellion against the state and capital.



When you drive up to a green light, stop and look. There might be a cop car coming through . . .

Theoretically, anarchism shares with both liberalism and socialism the values and principles that were articulated in the 1789 French Revolution. Liberty, equality and fraternity represent common ground for these three major political theories. However, it is the interpretation of the idea of freedom and the critique of the role of the state that makes anarchism unique. Anarchism challenges the state. The state consists of all those political, legislative, judicial, military and financial institutions that govern society.

Government is both harmful and useless and with anarchy (in the sense of the absence of government) comes natural

Government agencies prevent people from participating in the management of their own life and security. Since governments own the monopoly of power and are able to impose their will 'for reasons of state', governments' authority tends to be seen by anarchists as nothing more than the brutal domination of a minority of people over the majority, who are kept in serfdom and have to work for the interests of the few. An established government may leave some space for individual freedom as long as the privileges of the dominant classes are not threatened. It is a 'conditional' freedom that, in the eighteenth century, allowed liberalism to develop as a form of individualism, giving way to the affirmation of economic liberalism, as theorised by Adam Smith. At the same time liberalism as a political doctrine was progressively associated with the idea of the nation, so that both the individual and the nation-state had to be free to pursue their own independence. Bakunin's interpretation of liberty and his difference with liberalism are explained in this famous excerpt from *The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State* (1871): 'I am a fanatic lover of liberty. I consider it the only environment in which human intelligence, dignity, and happiness can thrive and develop. I do not mean that formal liberty which is dispensed, measured out, and regulated by the State; for this is a perennial lie and represents nothing but the privilege of a few, based upon the servitude of the remainder. Nor do I mean that individualist, egoist, base, and fraudulent liberty extolled by the school of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and every other school of bourgeois liberalism, which considers the rights of all, represented by the State, as a limit for the rights of each; it always, necessarily, ends up by reducing the rights of individuals to zero.' Conversely, anarchists are 'for freedom for all and for free agreement, which will be there for all when no one has the means to force others, and all are involved in the good running of society.' The main difference between anarchism and socialism

is centred on the dichotomy between means and ends. Anarchists refuse to accept any historical transitory stage before a utopian society. This impatient aspect of anarchists led many of them to criticise the formation of elite classes ruling on behalf of workers, such as the Russian government after the 1917 Revolution. Anarchists predicted the dangerous consequences of having a minority that, in pursuing the greatest social equality, ruled against individual freedom. Moreover, while socialism and unionism in the second half of the nineteenth century developed as nation-based movements, anarchism always maintained an international perspective. For anarchists, the emancipation of oppressed classes is strictly linked to the elimination of national borders and particular interests. Yet the central point of divergence between anarchists and socialists is represented by the very idea of government and power. Anarchists refuse to seize power since all power corrupts those who hold it. Anarchists refuse to advocate a 'proletarian dictatorship' as a way to overthrow the capitalist bourgeois society. Anarchists refuse to delegate their voices to parties, politicians or representatives of any kind. Anarchists criticise the idea of government because the cause of humankind's troubles 'does not lie in any particular form of government but in the fundamental principles and the very existence of government, whatever form it may take' (Bakunin). As a consequence, anarchists support self determination and self management of individuals and groups of individuals. Anarchist activism requires active participation, cooperation and solidarity. The history of those who delegated their voices to other people is the history of those who were always deceived and betrayed.

In the preface of *Anarchy in Action* (1973), Colin Ward argues that 'an anarchist society, a society which organises itself without authority, is always in existence, like a seed beneath the snow, buried under the weight of the state and its bureaucracy, capitalism and its waste, privilege and its injustices, nationalism and its suicidal loyalties, religious differences and their superstitious separatism.' Ward suggests that anarchism, 'far from being a speculative vision of a future society, it is a description of a mode of human organisation, rooted in the experience of everyday life, which operates side by side with, and in spite of, the dominant authoritarian trends of our society.' Yet, despite the existence of experimental anarchist communities which demonstrate the possibility and the will to live according to those unconditional ideals, the absolute ideas of equality and freedom constitute the fragility of anarchism as a political theory. As George Woodcock points out in *Anarchism* (1962) 'to describe the essential theory of anarchism is rather like trying to grapple with Proteus, for the very nature of the libertarian attitude — its rejection of dogma, its deliberate avoidance of rigidly systematic theory, and, above all, its stress on extreme freedom of choice and on the primacy of the individual judgement — creates immediately the possibility of a variety of viewpoints inconceivable in a closely dogmatic system.' In other words, anarchism is unique in its own interpretation of concepts such as authority, power, freedom and social justice. Yet anarchists' key principles of absolute freedom and rejection of authority, which give to anarchism its anti-dogmatic nature, represent both the richness and weakness of this ideology. However, if anarchism is a weak ideology — fought by states, governments and elite classes which feel threatened by anarchist ideas — and anarchism is unable to be taken seriously in consideration by the great majority of people, then why and what do anarchists fight for? In 1920 Malatesta pointed out that 'anarchy will be completely triumphant when all will be anarchist,' that is when the ideas of power and violence will be completely removed from human existence. This might take a while, one would say. How long shall anarchists wait before they can live in anarchy? Yet Malatesta's words highlight the importance of the relationship between means and ends, and thus whether or not it is possible to achieve a peaceful anarchist society. This subject has affected anarchism as a political movement throughout its history. Undoubtedly the choice of a few anarchists to endorse or simply accept violence, despite different contexts and possible justifications, has prevented other people from

Anarchists refuse to seize power since all power corrupts those who hold it.

embracing anarchist ideals. On the other hand, many anarchists stress the importance of the process of raising political consciousness through coherent means. For them, the idea of absolute freedom cannot be separated from the idea of absolute responsibility. The two notions are inseparable. Anarchists need to stand out as role models, living anarchically and consistently according to their ideals, so that their lives might be seen as an example, the best example of anarchist 'propaganda of the deed.' Anarchism is both a system of thought with key principles and the experimentation of new practices based on those principles. Human beings are the key, both individually and as a group. Anarchist thought is born from the analysis and critique of the present based on love for humanity. It proposes to everyone a goal. The goal is freedom within social equality, and the path to this end is constituted by responsibilities and by the conscious effort of participating. From this perspective, freedom is not just the ultimate goal, but it is rather the process of reclaiming, of participating and actively seeking and practising that freedom. Thus freedom can be seen as participation and not as a mere 'free space'. A perfect society, a utopian society, that is anarchy, needs to be built every day, with consciousness and responsibility. It is a new Avenue that needs to be walked every day. It is like the horizon of Eduardo Galeano's 2006 poem *Ventana sobre la utopia*:

'Ella está en el horizonte — dice Fernando Birri — Me acerco dos pasos, ella se aleja dos pasos. Camino diez pasos y el horizonte se corre diez pasos más allá. Por mucho que yo camine, nunca la alcanzaré. ¿Para que sirve la utopía? Para eso sirve: para caminar.'

'She is on the horizon' — says Fernando Birri — 'I advance two steps, she goes two steps backward. I take ten steps and the horizon move ten steps further. As much as I walk, I will never reach her. What's utopia for? It's for this: to walk' (my translation).

Doctor Spook

Quit Now

The packet of tobacco says—

"Smoking exposes you
to more than 40
harmful chemicals."

"these chemicals damage blood
vessels, body cells and
the immune system."

"QUIT NOW to reduce
your risk of chronic illness
or premature death."

Should not the designer clothes
label say—

"Obsessive shopping consumes you,
the consumer,
puts you in debt to big
grabbing hands —
Subjugates your soul
and keeps you working
for ever in the same drill
job you hate so as
to not lose it all."

"QUIT NOW to reduce the risk
of spending all your money
and all your money yet
earned on shit you don't need."

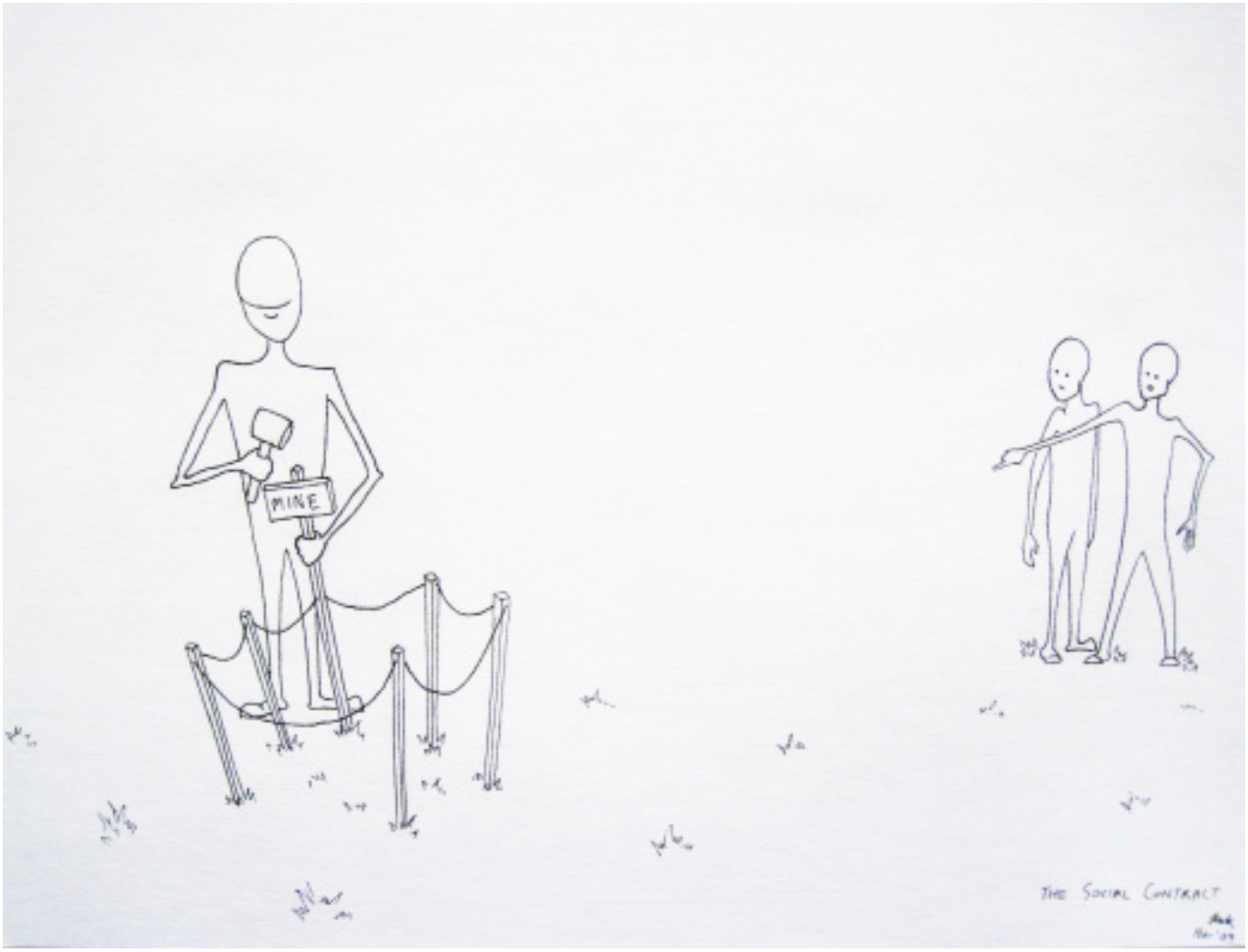
And should not the precious
i-phone screen read in warning:-

"Staring at prophetic screens
may make you deluded,
unsociable, asleep and blind
to all the world,
atmosphere, existence
all around."

"This technologically intoxicated
blindness
is highly addictive
and before you know it,
you may be totally reliant
on this new electronic drug
that all expect you to take
to keep you quiet and subdued
with all the pointless knowledge
you should really learn
by experience,
there at your manicured finger tips
as you stand for a bus
waiting to be mugged
for your privileges
and for granted tools of indolence."

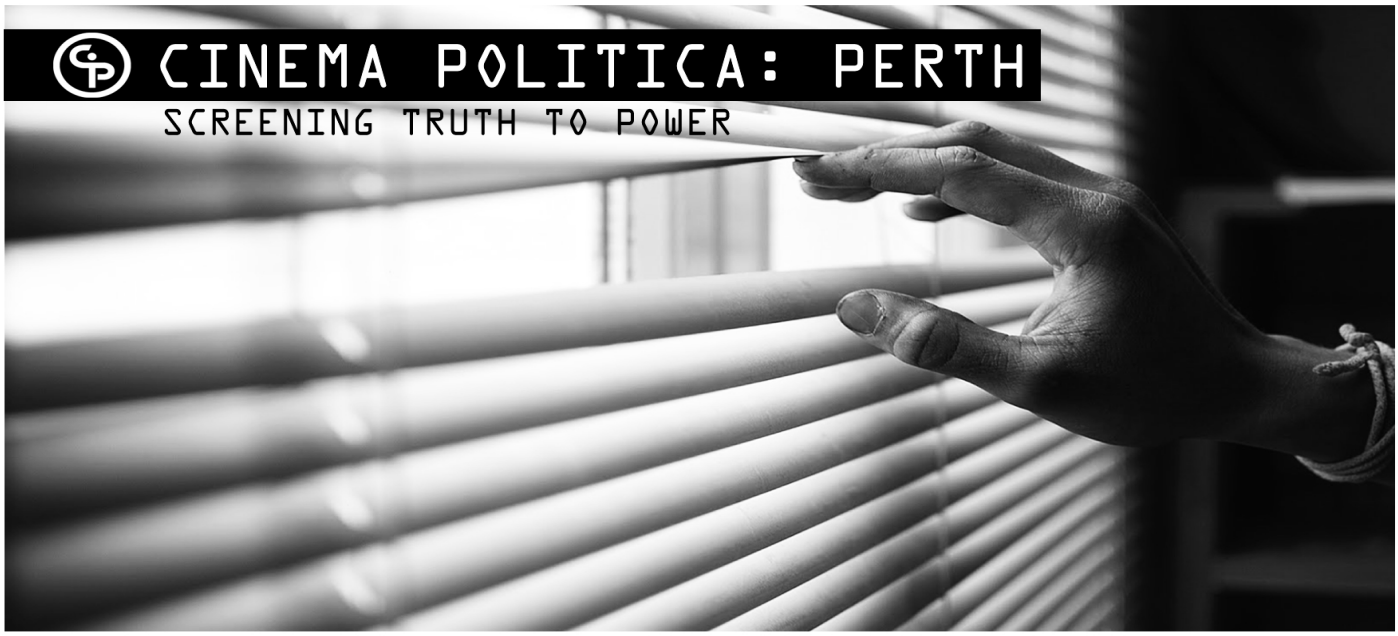
"QUIT NOW! Before it's too late —
before you forget your name
and can only remember it by
checking some invisible book
not worthy of the label of
that beautiful word and thing —
Before your rectangular eyes
dry up and your tongue
wizens and withers away
through disuse, curling backwards
and folding itself down
the empty pink cavern of your throat
along with the million billionaire
semen of corporate capitalist
gaiety and hypocrisy while
the fat-cat hands hold
your head to their groins
at the same time a'rubbin
themselves together in glee
of your stupid, tenacious naivety."

Johnny White



The Social Contract
Jaz Kaelin

CINEMA POLITICA: PERTH
SCREENING TRUTH TO POWER



NOW SHOWING @ OneUp Microcinema SUNDAYS 3PM
(312b William St, Northbridge)
//ALL SCREENINGS BY DONATION//
facebook.com/cinemapoliticaperth
cinemapolitica.org/Perth

It's Not a Competition

Dear *Avenue*

I would like to respond to 'An Open Letter in Defence of Humanism' that appeared in your first edition. Firstly, let me say that I appreciate the comradely spirit in which it was written and my response here is in no way intended to be antagonistic. Having said that, I feel that something of a corrective is in order. The 'Open Letter' states: '... many activists ... continually sabotage their own causes by proclaiming moralistic judgements which effectively exclude others' support. As an example, to gain moral superiority by contrasting the Australian public's response to the treatment of cattle exported to Indonesia with a perceived lack of concern over the treatment of people in detention centres is ludicrous and self-defeating.' In the context of a Perth-based magazine I can only assume you are directing this critique at the Refugee Rights Action Network (RRAN). And there is no problem with that, we welcome constructive criticism. The example given, however, is a bit tenuous. What is being critiqued is a very marginal slogan that was employed during the topicality of the furore around the mistreatment of live cattle exports. It also tends to misunderstand how RRAN formulates the slogans that appear on its placards (the actual example I have says 'Stop the Live Export of Refugees'). I would like to say that we sit around and go through an exhaustive and consensus driven process of deciding what would be an appropriate slogan for the particular rally. Alas that is not what happens. We are like a duck, serene in appearance, paddling like the clappers underneath. The reality is that those who do the photocopying usually have concocted the slogans. Except for slogans that are particularly offensive to the group, we are mostly pretty tolerant about what people produce. Through a process of 'natural selection' favourite slogans persist (e.g. 'Refugees are welcome here, racism is not!'). Less favourite slogans get pasted over. Although I think the example I pointed to — 'Stop the Live Export of Refugees' — is pretty innocuous, personally I was not a big fan of the 'live-export' refugee slogan.

I must admit, however, that I was struck at the time by how quickly and enthusiastically people were mobilised to vent their (legitimate) rage about the horrible treatment of animals when no such outrage was much expressed in response to Gillard's foiled attempt (for now) to 'export' refugees back to terrible conditions — the so-called 'Malaysian Solution'. Such a reflection, for me, was more about how refugees might be perceived within the Australian community — as dangerous, unwelcome, 'queue jumpers', etc. This sort of xenophobia is not present when the treatment of animals is at issue and that was quite starkly revealed when I juxtaposed the two things in my head. To say that the two issues were politically 'counter-posed' misses what we were trying to get at (which might have been our fault). I am sure what we thought (and still think) is that people should be outraged by the blatant mistreatment of animals *and* refugees. There was certainly no conception that people who support the refugee campaign are 'morally superior' to people who support the animal rights campaign. It is worth mentioning that RRAN has a significant cohort of people who themselves are strident advocates for animal rights (indeed I am periodically engaged in 'debate' as to my meat eating).

On a more theoretical level I think there is a distinction that has been missed in the Open Letter between morals (perhaps 'world-view' might be a better term) and 'moralism'. Whenever the aspiration is expressed for a 'better world', for a world without states, without capitalism, etc., a moral judgement is being made. The very concept of justice contains a moral premise. 'I oppose exploitation', 'I oppose oppression', 'I oppose discrimination': these are all moral statements. They advance one value system in preference to another. These are not 'moralistic' statements or rather they do not articulate the values of 'moralism'. What that discourse sounds like can be gleaned from listening to the pronouncements and condemnations of the spokespeople of conservatism and reaction (in its secular and religious guises) if you can bear to listen to Colin Barnett, who might be a good 'go to', or Julia Gillard. Margaret Court provides a particularly unpleasant and extreme example. These two moral discourses, these two 'world-views' — 'moralism' and a radical morality committed to a thoroughgoing, dare I say it, a revolutionary justice — are in competition with each other. They cannot live side by side. The refugee campaign is committed to gaining the support of the wider community, as you state, but part of us making it clear what we stand for involves us revealing 'anomalies' (to be very polite) in the attitude of the Australian community towards refugees and stridently putting forward our moral view that imprisoning refugees without charge or trial, persecuting the persecuted, is just plain wrong. That's not the only way we express our aim; some of us use a highly politicised language (myself in particular, as you can probably see).

At the base of our convictions, though, I think is the belief that what is being done in Australia to refugees is profoundly unjust. That leads some of us to very radical moral conclusions — that there should be 'No borders, No nation and No deportation'. It is a slogan that for the refugee campaign at the moment is perhaps ahead of its time if we really want to appeal to the wider community. Finally, I would not be true to the refugee campaign if I didn't exhort the readers of *Avenue* to become actively involved in it. If you don't like our slogans, please come and tell us. But I would prefer it if you told me as we raised our fists outside Perth Immigration Detention Centre — together.

Free the Refugees
Phil Chilton

(Although I do use the collective noun 'we', in this response the opinions and politics expressed are entirely my own. It does not necessarily reflect the broader views of RRAN or the wider refugee campaign.)

Birth Choices: Not Just about Staying Alive

"…it is not necessarily perverse to question whether our present priority should be to reach minimum figures for perinatal mortality at any price when this includes giving up things which free human beings have often felt to be more important than their own survival – such as freedom to live their own lives their own way and to make individual choices in line with their own sense of values."

Sheila Kitzinger, *The Place of Birth* (1978)

Because of modern medicine, childbirth is much safer now. Or at least, that's what most of us believe. Women in Western nations very rarely die as a direct result of childbirth complications. Infant mortality is the best it has ever been. If our only definition of 'safety' is based around expectations about life and death then modern medicalised maternity care is doing very well for us all. If no one dies, then it's all good, right? Women all over the world expect and deserve more from their health care system than the mere promise to keep mothers and babies alive. Access to choices around birth and decision-making during birth are now recognised as key factors in positive birth outcomes for women. However, a woman's choices are too often limited by medical expectations of a 'normal birth' — a category that, as any good obstetrician will tell you, only exists in retrospect.

Strict time, age and, size limits dictate women's experiences of childbirth in Western nations and particularly in Australia. Some women are told their babies are too big, some are told they're too small. Some women are considered too old to give birth vaginally, and for some women, their babies stay too long in the womb. According to the medical orthodoxy, women who have a caesarean section in their first pregnancy certainly cannot have a vaginal birth in any subsequent pregnancy. Women pregnant with twins cannot be delivered vaginally. And now more than ever, women who want to, are finding it harder and harder to give birth in their own homes.

Medicine has a cold message — you do not know, you are not entitled to know

What this means for women who know their own bodies and women who have an understanding of their own family histories when it comes to childbearing, is that their knowledge counts for very little within the medical context. For women who know that it is normal in their family for gestation to be a little longer than 'normal', or for women who instinctively know how to position their bodies to turn a baby in breech position; for women who know their dates are more accurate than the ultrasound or for women who know they would feel safer giving birth in their own homes, medicine has a cold message — 'you do not know, you are not entitled to know'. Women's own knowledge, their own authority to decide, has been squashed under the weight of medical orthodoxy.

In the name of 'safety' and 'risk minimisation', childbearing women in Australia are being prevented from attaining freedom in their birth choices. These issues are framed within a discourse which seeks to induce fear of the unknown, and which seeks to shame and isolate women who do not comply with medical dictates in their birthing choices. This is coupled with a policy of hiding research that does not promote the medical obstetric agenda and loudly and publicly drawing attention to research that encourages women to support medicalised approaches to birthing. Nowhere are these issues more obvious than in the debate about home birth in Australia. Birth in any location is not easy, pain free or without its risks, but the common perception that a hospital birth is less risky than a birth at home is challenged by research evidence. The issue is not one of risk versus no risk, but of which risks. Medicine, in its privileged and seemingly morally neutral way, wants to dictate to women which risks are the more important, but surely this should be a matter of individual choice?

Women should know that the case against home birthing has *not* been proven.

Women should know that in hospitals their risk of perineal tearing, surgical intervention and post partum haemorrhage are higher than in planned home births. Women should know that babies born in hospitals are more likely to need resuscitation after birth.[1] Women should know that their risk of instrumental delivery, episiotomy and caesarean section are significantly higher in hospital births.[2] And women should know that the case against home birthing has *not* been proven. In fact a 2007 review of 28 international studies comparing planned homebirth with hospital birth concluded that the studies 'demonstrate a remarkable consistency in the generally favorable results of maternal and neonatal outcomes, both over time and among diverse population groups'.[3]

The iatrogenic results of hospital based maternity care, the sense of powerlessness and isolation that many women feel in hospitals, and the shaming of women who make alternative choices are all outcomes of a self-reinforcing system that benefits medical thinking over the knowledge of individual women. For women to want to give birth in a place where they have the power, where they are the authority over their own body, and where they have the freedom to act as they please is not subversive or reactionary. To want to be surrounded by people you know and trust at a time when you are at your most vulnerable (and your most powerful) is not something that women should allow themselves to be scared out of by the medical profession and the state that supports them.

Birthing at home is not for everyone. No woman should be forced to birth in a place she feels unsafe or uncomfortable, but all women should have the right to make their own choices about birthing and they should have access to all the information which allows them to do so. The ability to make these individual choices — women's own right to decide what is best for them during this most personal experience — should be a matter of concern for all women. A good birth should not be defined merely by the survival of mother and child, but by the extent to which the mother and those around her experienced the birth as a positive life event. When it comes to birthing, it's not just about staying alive.

Bri McKenzie

1 These statistics are from a 2009 Canadian study which can be accessed online through the website of the Canadian Medical Association Journal. Patricia Janssen, et al., 'Outcomes of planned home birth with registered midwife…', *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, September 2009, vol. 181 (6–7), pp. 377–383.

2 See Robyn M. Kennare et al., 'Planned home and hospital births in South Australia, 1991–2006: differences in outcomes', *Medical Journal of Australia*, 2010, vol. 192, pp.76–80.

3 Judith T. Fullerton et al., 'Outcomes of Planned Home Birth: An Integrative Review', *Journal of Midwifery & Women's Health*, 2007, vol. 52, pp. 323–333.

essentialbeauty

This is the story of Mary Huff. She was watching television late one night when an ad came on. Mary thought it was nobody else's damn business how long her pubic hair was. So she yelled at the TV, Fuck off, Essential Beauty, you mile visogynists.

The World Turned Inside Out

There's a wonderful song by the English anarchist folk singer, Leon Rosselson, best known to many people from its cover version by Billy Bragg, called *The World Turned Upside Down*, which was a minor hit in Britain in the 80s. The song is about the attempts by the anarchist group, The Diggers, to establish a free commune on the 'common' land of the 'Common'wealth of England at Saint George's Hill near London after the Republican revolution of 1646. Needless to say, history being what we now know it is, the anarchists were slaughtered, literally put to the sword, by Cromwell's Republican troops in 1649. In Rosselson's words: *"We come in peace." / The orders came / to cut them down*. The idea that people can be responsible for their own lives is offensive to patriarchs of all stripes, including English Republicans, and especially authoritarian Puritans like Cromwell, despite his apparent opposition to monarchy. He only actually opposed hereditary monarchy. He was very enthusiastic about monarchy by force of arms, hence his self-appointed title, Lord Protector of the Commonwealth.

Almost every detail of what the Australian public seems to believe about Gallipoli is complete and utter fiction.

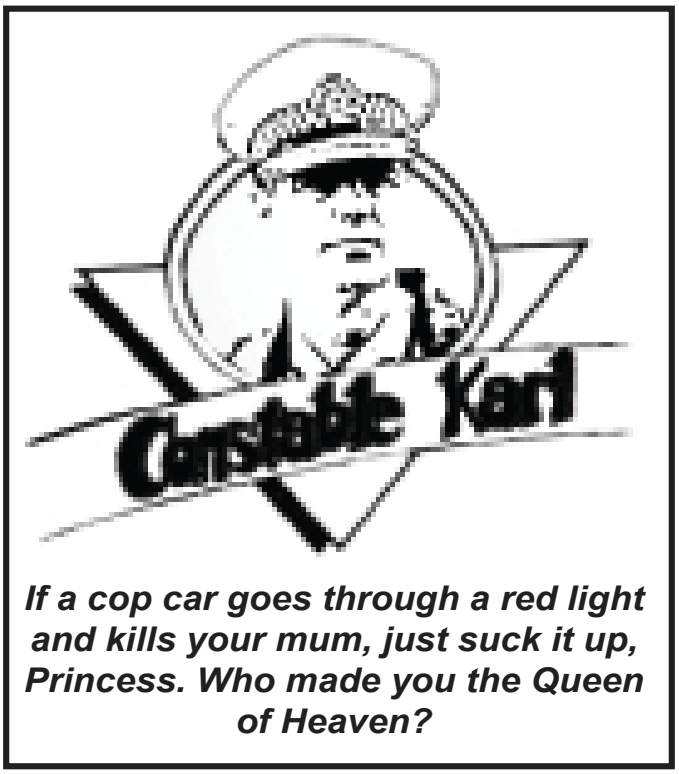
Rosselson's 'world turned upside down' is, of course, simply, society without rulers — anarchy.

But there's a weirder history which infects almost every corner of Australian political life, which I am calling here *The World Turned Inside Out*. This is about the fantastical histories of what happened at Gallipoli in 1915 and how it came to be a preposterous travesty of Australian historical memory. Because almost every detail of what the Australian public seems to believe about Gallipoli, driven by a desperate attempt to make Australia look like a civilised society — as if — is complete and utter fiction.

It is almost beyond my comprehension that a society would commemorate, as part of its national story, an event that was a military debacle, a total and comprehensive embarrassing military defeat, a rout. It's as weird as Poles celebrating 1st September 1939 or Aborigines celebrating 26th January 1788. Yet a man who presents himself as a journalist, foreign affairs editor of *The Australian*, with a claim to represent a national agenda, Greg Sheridan, (yeah, I know that's a preposterous joke, but he said it, not me), wrote recently, 'Anzac Day — sacred, profound, universal.'

It is simply not true. It is pure and utter drivel. It is a pack of lies.

Absolutely nothing of the intended aims of the invasion of Turkey on 25 April 1915 was achieved. In the eight months of the campaign not a single soldier of the invading forces reached the position that they were supposed to reach on the first day of the invasion. Not a single invading soldier got more than two miles (about three kilometres) from the beach. At sunset on the day of the invasion, all the ground commanders recommended in their reports to the campaign generals that the invasion should be abandoned, that it was already a hopeless defeat, a lost cause. More than 40,000 Allied soldiers and 86,000 Turks died *after* those recommendations were ignored. After eight months of slaughter, the invading force left, utterly vanquished. Not a single inch of ground was gained by those 40,000 dead invaders. It was a sheer unadulterated military disaster. The only successful action of the entire campaign was the, literally, overnight silent retreat by Australian forces without a single casualty. The only good thing the Australian soldiers did was to run away. And that's the only thing I think we should celebrate, if anything, about this catastrophe.



If a cop car goes through a red light and kills your mum, just suck it up, Princess. Who made you the Queen of Heaven?

Why on earth would anyone want to remember any of this as a good thing? More than 120,000 men died for absolutely nothing. The campaign had literally no effect on the outcome of the war. Yet we are told over and over that they died for democracy. Where the idea of democracy intersects with the actual story is never specified. It's asserted as an article of faith, that we are expected to believe solely because so many people died.

So, to the serious questions: Why does any of this story persist, and why is there so much irrational and violent response to a simple telling of a history that is on record, in the versions of what actually did happen, available in every public library in the land, and available for an hour or two's wages 'in all good bookshops'?

I have suggested for many years that the reason that Australians need to pretend that they won the battle, and the war, in Gallipoli, or that the defeat was somehow

still a magnificent feat of arms, is that they cannot bring themselves to admit how they won the wars against the many nations that made up what we now call Australia in the years between 1788 and 1915: Gallipoli worship is Australia's twisted version of genocide guilt.

Now, I know I have never killed nor intentionally harmed an Aboriginal person, but I also learned early, as an immigrant, that my wealth as a New Australian, as we were called then, was based entirely on their dispossession. Some of my earliest encounters with Aboriginal people were, literally, of people drunk and asleep in gutters in the rain in Forrest Place. I was at that stage of my life still a reactionary teenage Thatcherite and yet my response was still, 'This is wrong.' I was always a rebel, of sorts, (a fascist dad sort of does that to you) but witnessing the heartlessness of Australian society's response to people who had clearly been robbed of everything that made them human, shook me, and shook me hard. It's probably what pushed me to be an anarchist.

The older version of Australia had to find a myth that sustained the idea that 'we' are the 'nice' people. I, and many other immigrants, and some natives — in the true and twisted versions of the word — found an eerie hostility to conversation about what actually happened in Australia. Australians didn't want to think about whose land they were living on, and they certainly didn't want to talk about it. It was English land, land for the English, in Australia. They couldn't think that it was a dispossession. Many of the English didn't even like the Scots, the Welsh and the Irish claiming any rights to Australian-ness. I have met many English-born Australians who don't regard Australian-born people of Italian or Greek heritage as Australian. I hardly dared to ask them whether they thought that Aborigines were Australian.

White Australia's official history is a horribly flawed exercise in moral philosophy.

So, what happened? Did white folks turn up and Aboriginal people said, 'Oh, that land? Where we live and thrive? Where we have lived for millennia? No, we don't need it any more. You can have it now.' White Australia's official history is a horribly flawed exercise in moral philosophy: 'Bad things are done by bad people. I am not a bad person.' Because, of course, no one thinks that they are a bad person. Even Hitler thought he was doing good. 'My father brought me up. So my father was not a bad person. Therefore, my father could not have done bad things. Therefore, the society he served could not have been responsible for bad things happening. Therefore, the people who talk about massacres of Aboriginal people must be lying. Therefore, the society of the past must have been just.' It's rubbish philosophy. It's rubbish history. It's rubbish morality. And yet this remains the basis of the sustaining myth of Australian history. And the most ridiculous thing about this version is the suggestion that it wasn't contested, that we are looking at the past through the lenses of today's morals.

At a time when John Howard was rejecting the idea that he had ever been racist, or that any white person had ever been racist, and so it was a wrong idea to see the values of the past through the prism of modern values, there just happened to be a showing on TV of a film made in Australia in 1950, *Bitter Springs*. The film was about the land wars (that never happened!) and there's a dramatic scene where immigrant farmers confront Aborigines defending their land. An Aborigine tells the immigrants to leave. One of the immigrants shoots him and kills him. Another immigrant, Mac, (played by the well-known actor, Gordon Jackson) yells, 'That's murder.' He is ignored.

I have no idea how Australian society saw it at the time, but John Howard is clearly lying when he says these are values that were not discussed in his childhood. And how did he manage to skillfully not notice every time they ran through *Thou Shalt Not Kill* at Sunday School? Howard put a lot of effort into re-shaping the place of the Anzac myth in Australian society. The sanctioned version of Australian history wants to pretend that critics are holding the past up to the values of the present. It seems the only way this can be done is to turn what happened at Gallipoli completely inside out and turn a disaster into a triumph. Greg Sheridan, in the same article, says, 'The Anzac legend, so positive and true and good, has countless beneficial consequences. Perhaps no society, not even the US, defines its identity so much by a single modern feat of arms.' If anyone is prepared to believe that, then there is probably nothing they wouldn't be prepared to believe.

Mar Bucknell

DIRECT ACTION TIPS

To disable a mechanical lock, activists often use superglue. Not only is the glue toxic, it can look incriminating if you're carrying a tube of superglue in your pocket at 3 in the morning.

However, any mechanical lock can be disabled with a matchstick. Flatten the end slightly and then jam it into the keyhole as hard as possible. Then pull it out a tiny bit and break it off. Use the stub to jam the match back into the lock. It works just as well as glue and it's not incriminating to be carrying matches. How does the cop know whether you smoke? Very narrow keyholes can also be done with thin twigs.

Happy locksmashing!

Sweet Nothing

Michelle Braunstein

I'm dancing in the shell of a partially constructed building, when something shiny catches my eye through a glassless window. I fancy I'm hearing it drone even above the bass, while I watch its fuselage shimmer in the dawn sky. Heading for the exit, I dodge dancers and step over bodies writhing naked together under dusty blankets.

'Might be airlifts today'

I announce to friends who lean on a wall shivering, but they offer only empty stares and a glass pipe. Cycling home to the apartment, I yank my bike up the stairs, and scare off come-down thoughts with memories of the plane. Somehow, John sleeps through me bursting into the bedroom; his packed bag a pillow. I sit beside him, placing my fingertips gingerly at the centre of his forehead.

'Wakey, wakey. I saw a plane.'

He rouses slowly, his hazel eyes rolling like a broken doll's while I wait, chattering about in-flight entertainment and grinding my teeth.

By the time we pass hair tests administered by health personnel in hazard suits and finish with the paperwork, it's late afternoon. In the camp, there are people milling everywhere and the atmosphere is downright twitchy.

'... expect us to sit around waiting ...'

'... formal complaint ...'

'... we were told a week, tops ...'

These are things we hear muttered while people wait to talk to officials. I notice a woman standing beside a water tank. She holds twin toddlers in her tattooed arms.

'Do you know what's happening with the flights?' I ask her.

'The one earlier was only a food drop. No-one will tell me why they're not taking anyone.'

She stares at me with bloodshot eyes. I feel a choking sensation and tightness in my chest.

'What are you going to do?'

She shrugs and kisses each child once on the head.

Night time noises of children crying, canvas flapping and drunken bickering whips in and out with the wind.

'We're better off out there.'

John's expression tells me we share identical vision of strolling off the camp with whatever we can pilfer from the somnolent ground staff. But it's night-time and we need sleep. In our newly issued government tent we try to make love but it's futile.

'Sorry Margo, I just don't know if I'm coming or going.'

'Oh John, you know I blow hot and cold anyway,' I say breathily. As we laugh he kisses my neck, nipping me teasingly but I'm high and hovering several inches above our embrace.

'Look at us!'

I shake my head and he yawns. Night-time noises of children crying, canvas flapping and drunken bickering whip in and out with the wind. We finally fall asleep wrapped tightly around each other.

I wake at sunrise and through the tent walls everything is purple. For a moment John is so still he seems dead, and then as though suddenly revived, his glottal gasp rips through the stillness. Rain begins to spit tiny nails onto our tent and the wind has settled. Good for us, but not so for the infected, just one city away. Once that dampness hits the respiratory system, the coughing and fevers begin, then seizures, followed finally by death – so the literature outlines.

An explosion suddenly tears through the camp's quietness. I scramble up, nudging John awake and we quickly pull on our boots and bags. Stepping out of the tent, we're watchful as cats and while everyone's attention is on the cause of the sound, we swipe a bag from outside an official tent and skulk off to the eastern fences.

'Funny-Comb! Sweet as!'

John digs through the contents of the stolen backpack.

'What else have we got in here?'

We're slumped on flat, dusty rocks, far enough away from the camp that it now seems we were never there. I snatch the bag and stroke his jaw gently in one fluid movement. He is bewildered. Guilt needles my insides: why do I treat him this way? I ask myself, but I am distracted by the tent, packets of food, flask of water, and large bottle of whiskey in the bag.

'Wanna get trashy?' I ask, with a salesgirl smile.

But we decide to keep walking, emboldened by the knowledge that we now have things we didn't have before. The land is arid, yet I scan constantly for tree roots, rats; anything edible.

When daylight begins to drain from the sky we erect the tent in silence. The sound of the zip and the swish of nylon comforts me as we climb inside. Breaking open the whiskey is the obvious thing to do and as the brown liquid scorches my insides, my come-down finally recedes.

'Is there any point to this?' John asks solemnly, while I begin to fossick around in the bag.

'To what? Life?'

My laugh is a hiss over the cellophane packages which crackle while I search.

'You know what I mean.'

He means "us" but I pretend I think he means our being on the run, again.

'Did you want to stay in the apartment and wait for the bug?'

He shrugs with one shoulder and lies down, facing the tent wall.

I finally find some berries and pop two from their blister pack straight into my mouth. Their artificially enhanced sweetness and sourness cause me to salivate, and my face contorts involuntarily. The immediate burst of energy I feel tells me there is definitely some hyper-cane in the berries, modified to almost amphetamine potency. How long before you dump me on my ass? I whisper to the packet.

After a minute or two, when the high is over, I begin stretching and doing some diaphragmatic breathing. I notice a tickle, then the same tightness I had in my chest

back at the camp. Then a coughing fit assails me.
'Dust'
I rasp to John's back, when the spasms subside. I lie down and welcome sleep which comes like a shroud, all darkness and nothingness.

bitter bitter

the white core of the sun is bitter
we taste it with the tips of our tongues
this blue and pearly world seems to glow
it's glamorous, mindless, insatiable

we find a way to primal instinct in the end
to do what the body says to, obey the mind
to let the guts ache with want, to try to consume the world
to try to consume all life before you die to consume enough that you might live
to feed and feed and feed and never to stop
to fuck and fuck and become sore and chastise your lust but fuck again
we grow these mutant minds in order to become human and then
we instinctively look for ways to numb them to debase them
to work hard to lead ourselves to our pens
if the whole act's like an animal are we its cells?

do our actions and our justifications and our good intentions mean nothing
do we simply serve the revolving tumour of our whole being
our "humanity" our farce consuming false enlightenment
while we are truly just pushing for the next consumption
all this ravishing the world and slurping at glory and
crapping delight
every revelation mired in hypocrisy
feeding from the teat of my systemic love.

Zane

Silence is your best friend

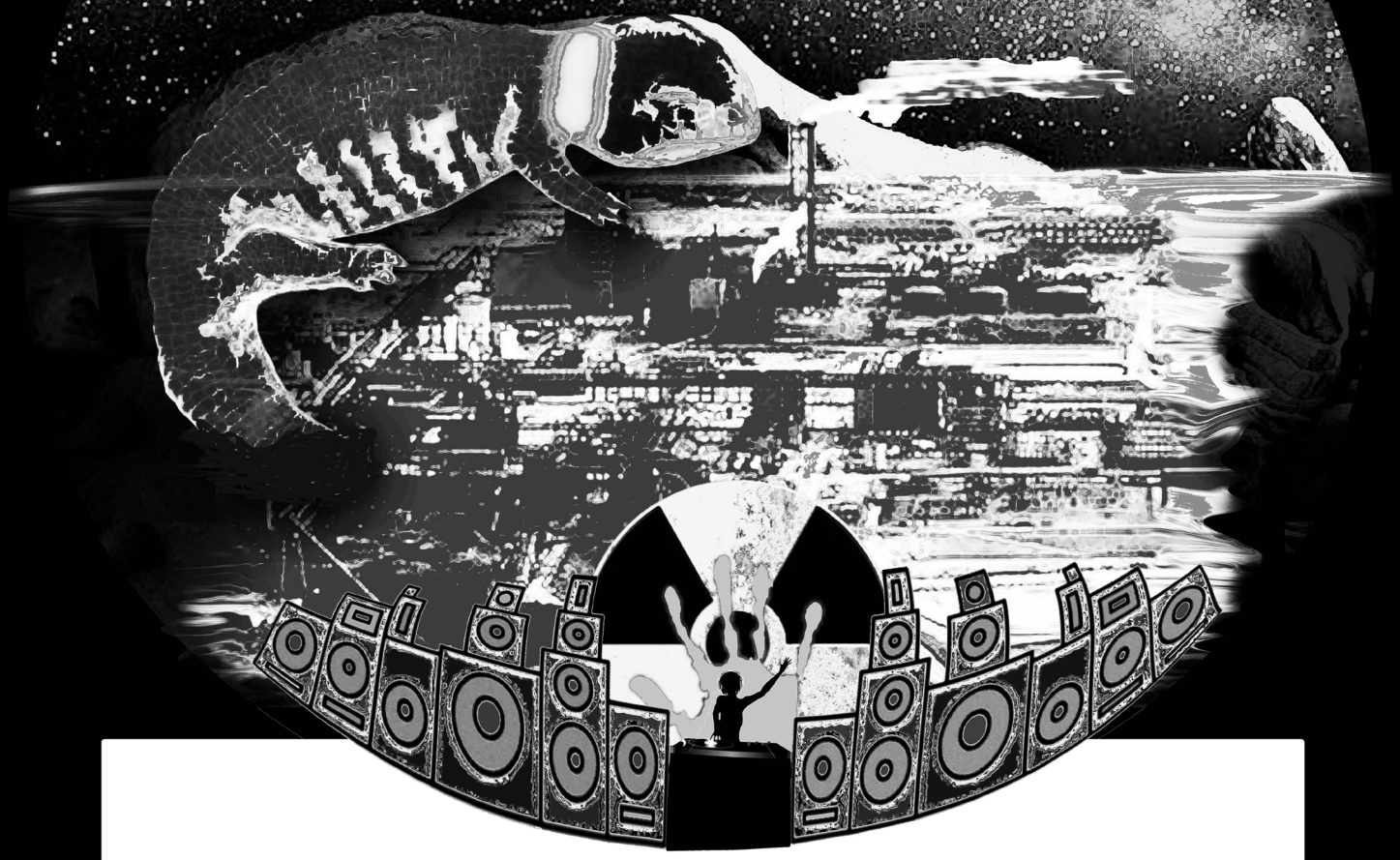
When asked your name?
When asked your address?
When asked your business?
When asked where you're going?
When asked why you won't talk?
When they demand an answer...
When threatened with arrest,
When threatened with detainment,
When threatened with incarceration,
When threatened with pain,
When threatened with death,
You have the right to remain silent.

Neon Bear

Britain's Next Top Model
Jaz Kaelin

THE LIZARD'S REVENGE

SHUT ROXBY DOWN
FESTIVAL AT THE GATES OF HELL.



Sleeping underneath the ground there is an old lizard, Kalta the sleepy lizard.
The lizard ain't so sleepy anymore.
BHP is mining right into that Lizards body.

Kalta is angry and wants revenge. Arabana elder Kevin Buzzacott is calling the people of the world to help the lizard shut down the mine.
He is calling for people to come and heal the land in the name of peace and justice for the next 10,000 generations to come.

The land, the lizard and the creatures of this earth are summoning everybody who gives a shit to the gates of Roxby Downs.
For a Rolling Blockade music/arts festival to protest against the expansion of the largest uranium mine in the world.
Party in a Dangerous Planet with Theatre, Cabaret and Art installations. Over 20 musical acts. Solar Powered sound system extravaganza and wind powered cinema. More to be announced...

For more info or to get involved email- unitedstruggle@live.com
or check us out on facebook - The Lizards Revenge

Meet at Mutonia Alberrie creek Station Oodnadatta track from 7th of July to build stuff...

@ ROXBY FROM 14th to 18th July 2012

Infinite Possibilites

Reality, is just space.
Hard to believe,
I know.
That we all leave here,
without a trace.

Space.
Dark matter.
It is everything and nothingness,
So what am I to create of myself today?
When I am nothingness
but everything too?

Are you connected to the land?
The wild wonderland?
You will see yourself in it
Because you come from it,
rely on it
and will return to it.

See the infinite possibilities of creative chaos
that you were born into
as perception determines reality.
Open your eyes
To the beauty
that's all around.

Days slip away
through mindless chatter,
reverberating clatter
like machines we work,
yet do we touch the truth
and what we've learned?

Existence,
like sand in an hourglass;
forever falling.
Forever changing shape.
Are you stuck?
Are you just trying to make a buck?
Look through it,
transcending senses.
Find the knowing of
something bigger.
Something greater
you and i.

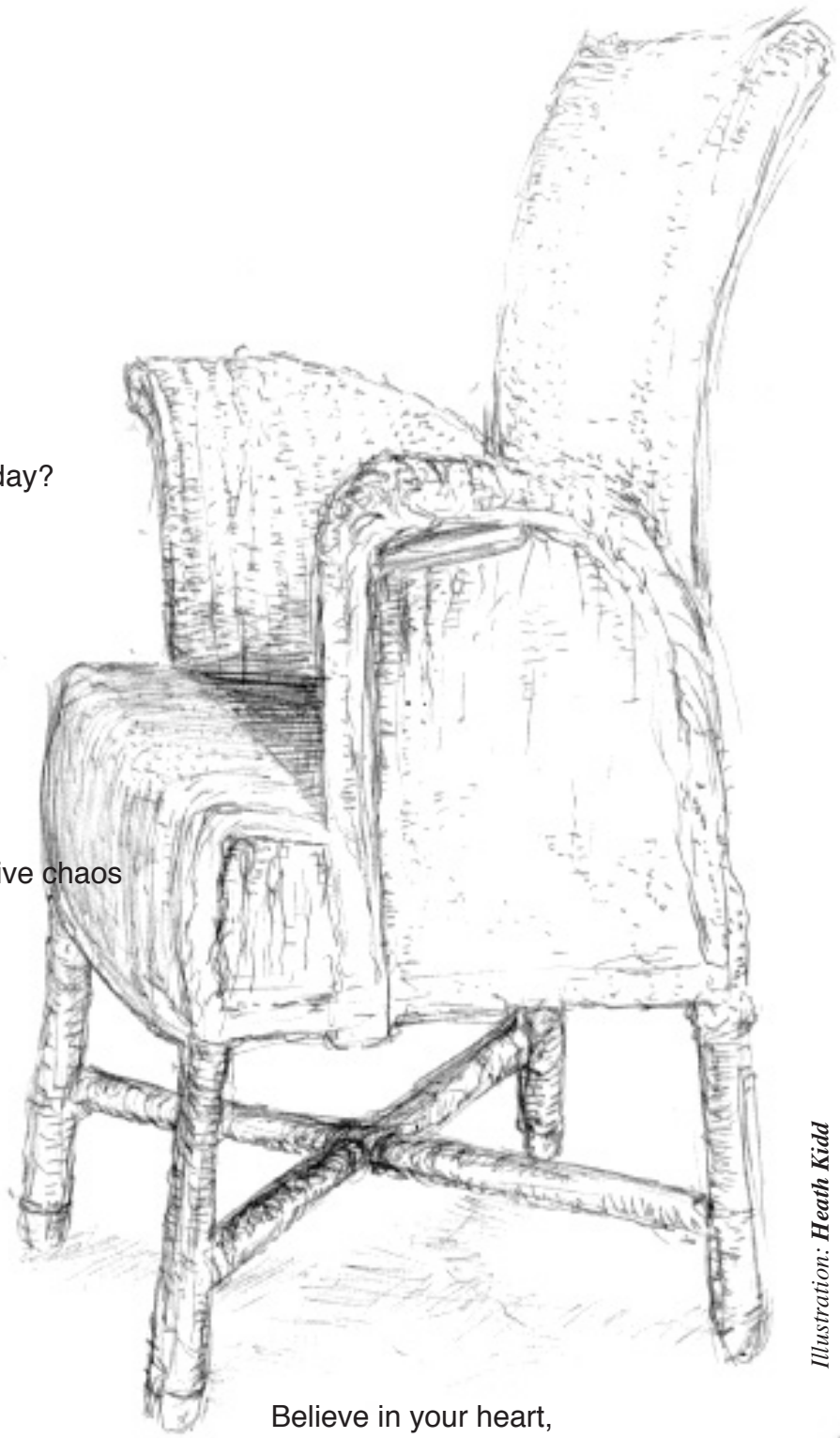


Illustration: ***Heath Kidd***

Believe in your heart,
to finding a better way.
Where bridges meet,
and wars become obsolete.

Ridicule and pain
will dissipate,
once you realize what you already create.
At the end of the day,
only you will ask yourself,
are you doing what you anticipate?

Fear and the State

The rise of totalitarianism in the early twenthieth century signified the birth of a new form of oppression. Arendt claimed that 'totalitarianism was the suppression of all independent institutions, the penetration of regime into all aspects of public and private life, and the effects of terror itself in the figurative and literal deconstruction of the subject.' Though tyrannical dictatorships Have been a presence in human society since human society's conception, never before had a system of governance formed itself around power in such a way that power was not the means of the society but rather the ends.

For the first time we witnessed the birth of a nihilistic destructionism that existed outside of the discourse of ethics. During the totalitarian crisis of the Second World War we witnessed the death of the enlightenment project and its core values; of progress and human emancipation. The failure and betrayal of revolutions, the destruction of two world wars, and unfathomable horror of the Holocaust all defy understanding within the framework of the enlightenment project.

As J. Isaac (1992) claims the tragedy of the twentieth century was one of intelligence gone awry and rebellion run amok. What must be learnt from this epoch are lessons of grave importance that seem to have been missed. The horror of the 1940s was supported inseparably by ideology. Totalitarianism's control was born out of the vacant acceptance or complicit allowance of the general populace. It manifested itself in many ways, but principly through hate and fear. Camus and Arendt claim that totalitarianism finds its true power in its control of language and more importantly its control of discourse. In a very Orwellian sense if government can cut the discourse of rebellion and dissent then the ability for rebellion and dissent to manifest is lost.

Many would claim that there is no similarity between our government and the regimes of Hitler and Stalin; but such a claim is false. Firstly, as many of the intellectuals of the resistance era identified, we need to move away from our percieved moral superiority and from our reliance on western exceptionalism. We must instead reinvent our belief as separate from universal notions. We must find a new point of judgement that actively precludes absolutes and is based instead on a deep understanding of context. As citizens we need to take responsibility for the action carried out in our name by our government. For if we are to learn anything from the totalitarian crisis, it is that all it takes for horror and terror to manifest, is our complicity.

If we look around at our society we can see a rich discourse of dissent; though it may not be the dominant discourse it is still present. The only way for it to exist is for us to continue to actively engage in it. Arguably, the most devastating effect of totalitarianism was the manner in which it atomized and separated us from one another. The nature of totalitarianism is one that precluded community, friendship and induced a deep loneliness that allows connection only through agreement with official rhetoric and ideology.

It is the negation of community that we must expressly resist. In this aspect our society shares common ground with totalitarianism. We find ourselves devided along lines of class, sexuality, skin colour and gender. We have our worth assigned to us by our possessions and salaries. We must redefine ourselves, not in terms of material fact, but in terms of our innate indiviudal worth. We must realize that fear, the creation of the other and the atomization of our society are corrosive elements that permit nothing but horror. We must rely on the antidote to fear and alienation, these being trust, kindness, community and the realisation that regardless of the narrative we assign to ourselves, we are just human beings.

Anon

moMeant

it's a creep
time of it all
can't judge the distance
can't see the door for the walls
i am creep
wait till ya back is turned
u wake from yr slumber
and thunder echoes in yr hall

there will be no cars on fire (ahhh)
no beheading of the king (ahhh)
no trumpets or choirs (ahhh)
victory won't sing (ahhh)
give me evolution (ahhh)
i trust evolution (ahhh)
all yr revolutions will be resolved

Park Bear

Reclaim the Streets!

I don't want your revolution if I can't dance; the importance of frivolity, and a look at the lighter side of social revolt

On a chilly winter's eve recently, my Kiwi housemates and I hopped into a taxi on the deserted 'Cappuccino Strip' in Fremantle, heading back to our wholesome family neighbourhood of Hammy Hill after a few brews. The old geezer driving turned out to have a few opinions he felt like venting to his tired audience. Apparently Freo was different thirty years ago, when he arrived in the sleepy port settlement off a passenger steamboat travelling from Holland – much more social. Now it seems dead quiet, with no one mingling in public places, instead locked up in their cells by 7pm, doped up on internet and prime time. He says we're all just whores to the almighty dollar now, and the law's existence merely protects criminals instead of common citizens. 'They' roam freely at night without the restraint of community-imposed accountability and with a media-projected anonymous menace which scares us into our protective insulated bubbles. If the neighbourhood was an interactive group of people there would be no dark, dank pockets where only the 'ferals' wander and good citizens avoid.

If all of this wasn't enough riling political fodder for a quiet Tuesday night, our luminous chauffeur proceeded to charge us (the next generation) as the only ones with the power to change things. "Bring back community and values of quality over quantity!" he ranted passionately into the bemused silence of the taxi as we wound through the dark manicured maze of suburban Perth. I told him "We're trying, sir, believe me." But I'm not sure exactly what I meant by that. I feel like I want with all my heart to try but I'm not so sure that I am in fact trying very hard. I thought that being an environmentalist would be trying, but I can't even seem to manage that very well. Organic veggies and Fair Trade certainly start stretching ends apart after rent and the internet bill have come out of your Centrelink pay, which is harsh when you're only on the dole because you're avoiding selling your soul to Woolies or Rio Tinto on a conscientious objection. I'm starting to think more and more that it's all about community. That's the most important place to start. It's where it all started going wrong. And I'm sure that that's what my parents and all their punky raver 90s crew realised back in the day when they did their bit by organising free dance parties in warehouses, streets and forests from Sydney to Byron, where people could speak and act freely and experimentally away from the oppressive regulation of modern routines. It's about getting people communicating and cooperating and thinking aloud with each other. We need to Reclaim the Streets.

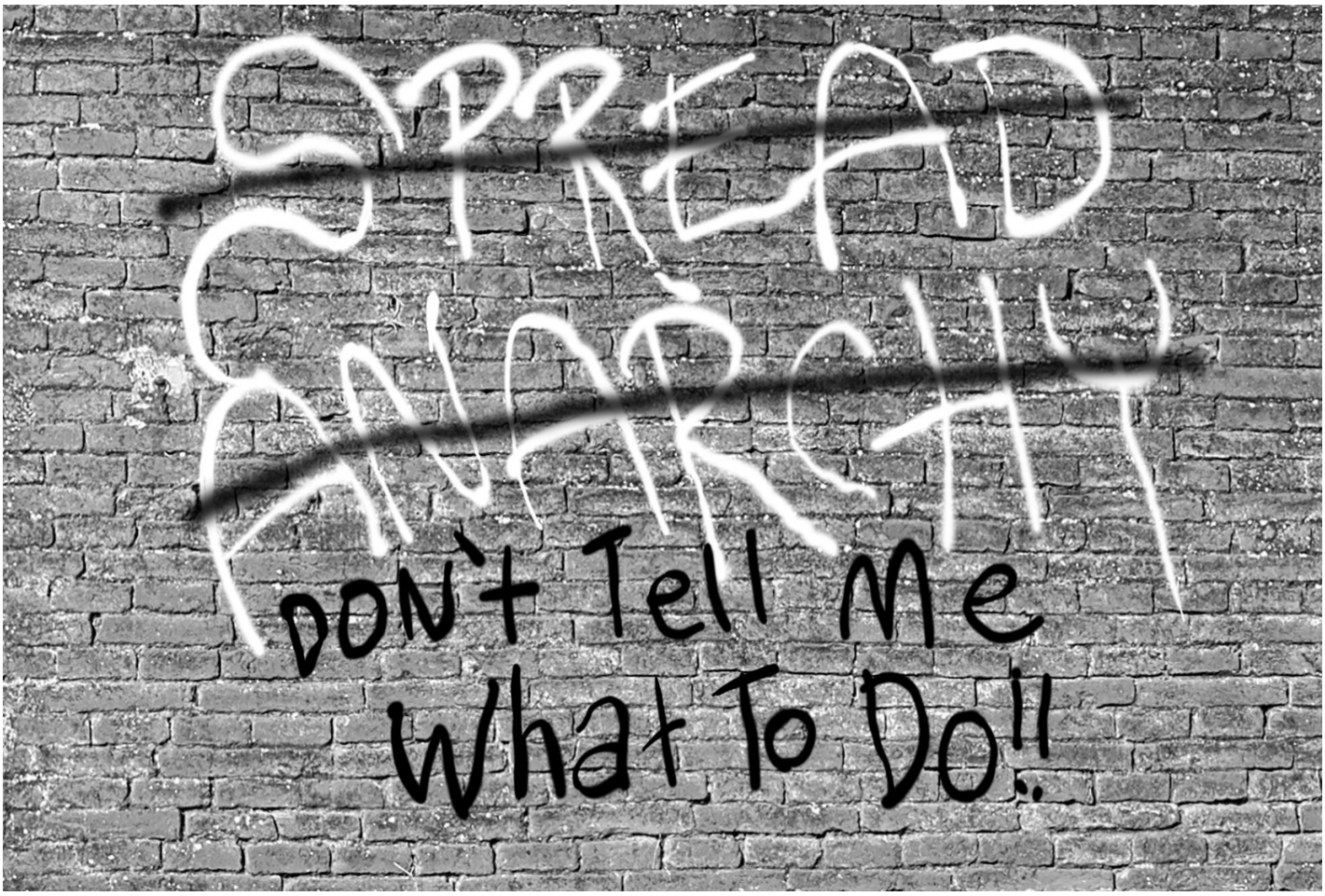
Reclaim our streets from instilled fear and isolation. Take back that sense of community that has been sneakily pinched from under our very noses while we were busy working eight-hour shifts and getting home in time for a demoralising Facebook trawl before bed. Let's get back out there, with a mobile sound system and a picnic rug, and let's start the party again; some real time, experiential living. Then maybe we will be able to tell our own kids with nostalgic pride that we were there when it was a vibrant rocking place, buzzing with fearless camaraderie and the intoxicating kinetic energy of social collaboration.

Jaz Kaelin

Sydney, date unknown

London, 1999

Reclaim The Streets (RTS) began in 1990s Britain as a group of people with the collective ideal of community ownership of public spaces. The concept has since gone global, with road 'invasion' street parties being staged all over Europe, Australia, North America and Africa. The RTS philosophy is that it is vehicle traffic, not pedestrians, who are causing the obstruction and that by occupying the road people are in fact opening up public space. It has been characterised as a resistance movement to the corporate forces of globalisation and, more specifically, against the car as the dominant mode of transport. Initial instances confounded authorities, but over the years it has become institutionalised in many places as a legal protest. The demonstrations typically involve music and dancing on roads, and a period in which a road is occupied without marching.



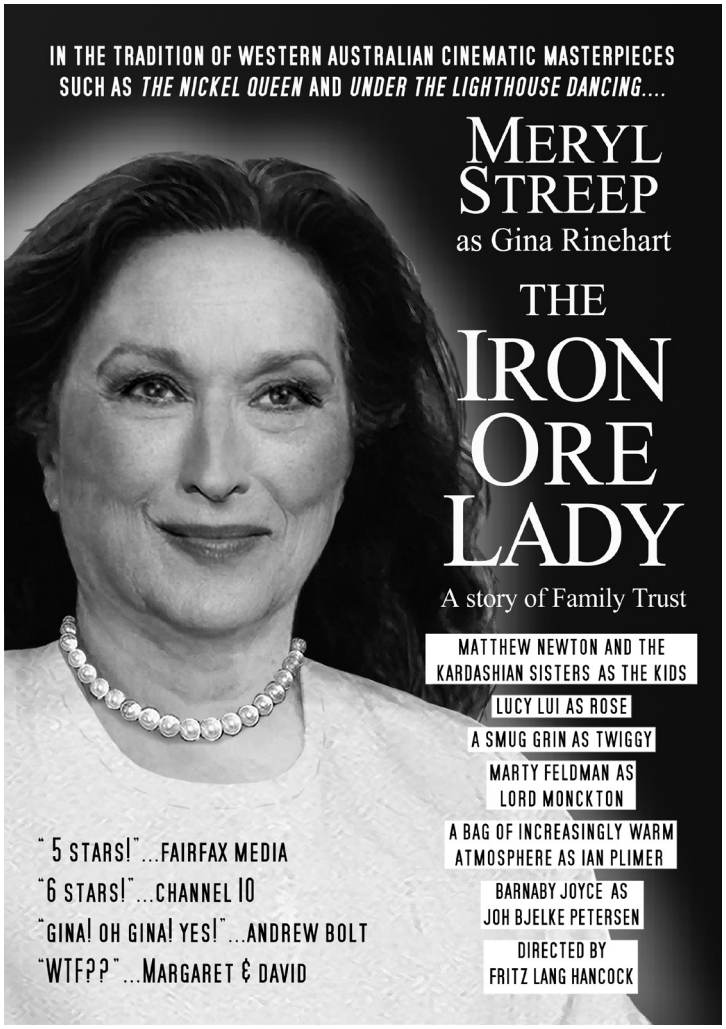
ALMOST THE NEWS

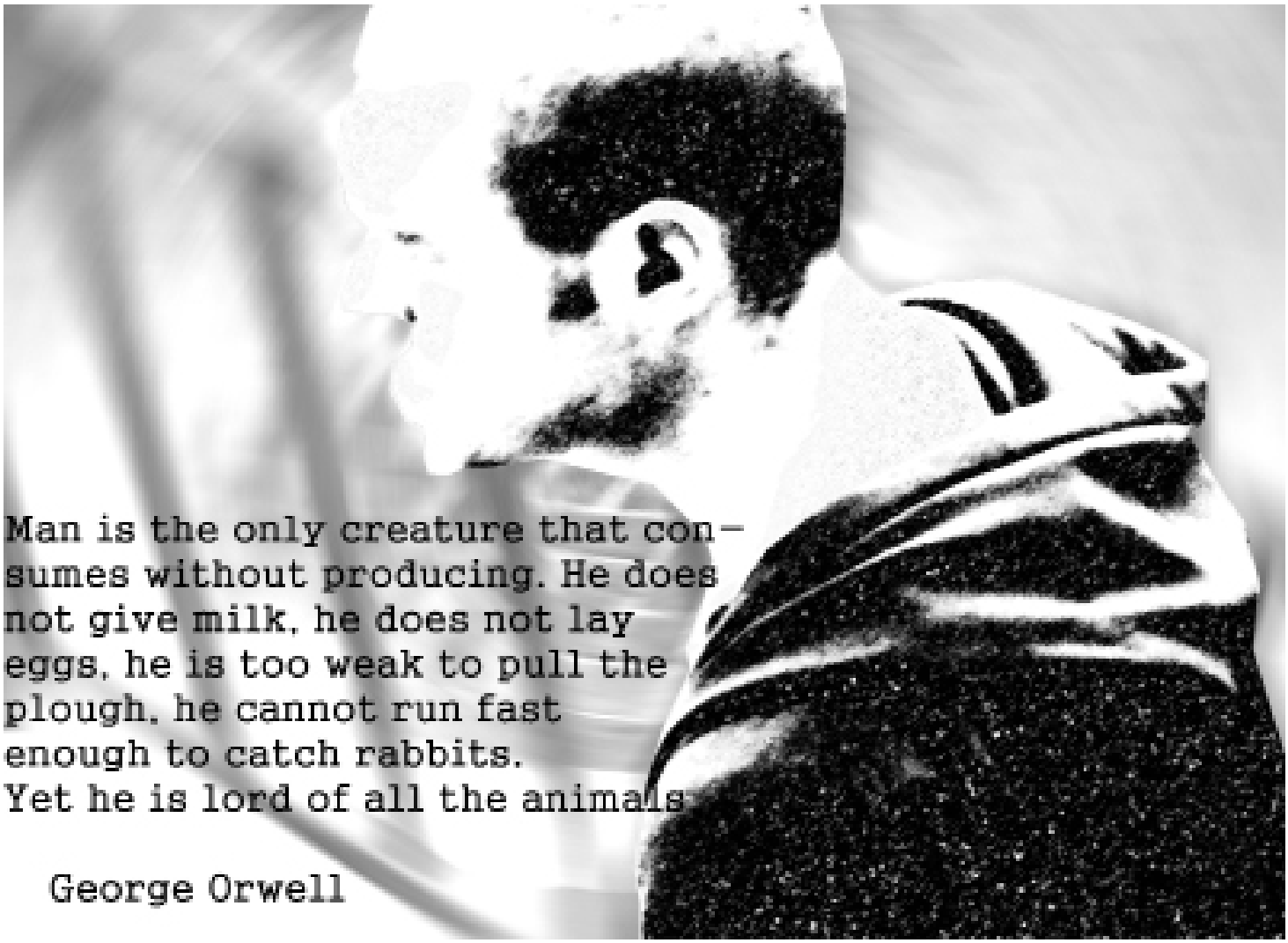
BIKIES are shooting each other. And the problem is ... ?

PREMIER COLIN BARNETT has announced that the Perth Waterfront development will be called Elizabeth Quay. He said it had a slightly better ring to it than Obsequious Grovelling White Elephant Facing the Wrong Way.

POLICE in London held a large protest rally against budget cuts. A spokesthug for the Police Union said the cutbacks would have a major impact on public safety. "Those unemployed black kids don't beat themselves up, you know."

MILITARY spending of $4 billion has been deferred. We're all going to die!


IN THE TRADITION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIAN CINEMATIC MASTERPIECES
SUCH AS THE NICKEL QUEEN AND UNDER THE LIGHTHOUSE DANCING....
MERYL STREEP
as Gina Rinehart
THE IRON ORE LADY
A story of Family Trust
MATTHEW NEWTON AND THE KARDASHIAN SISTERS AS THE KIDS
LUCY LUI AS ROSE
A SMUG GRIN AS TWIGGY
MARTY FELDMAN AS LORD MONCKTON
A BAG OF INCREASINGLY WARM ATMOSPHERE AS IAN PLIMER
BARNABY JOYCE AS JOH BJELKE PETERSEN
DIRECTED BY FRITZ LANG HANCOCK
" 5 STARS!"...FAIRFAX MEDIA
"6 STARS!"...CHANNEL 10
"GINA! OH GINA! YES!"...ANDREW BOLT
"WTF??"...MARGARET & DAVID


Man is the only creature that con-
sumes without producing. He does
not give milk, he does not lay
eggs, he is too weak to pull the
plough, he cannot run fast
enough to catch rabbits.
Yet he is lord of all the animals
George Orwell

Is Communism Just an Idea?

Recently I read a little book with this title, written by Tariq Ali and published in 2010, although it was clear from the text that he was recycling material written in part at least in the 1980s. (Discussing the post-Brezhnev Soviet situation in the present tense is a bit of a giveaway — a little more editing would have been in order, comrade Tariq!) Now communism in precisely those terms (i.e. as an idea) has been in the air lately. An academic conference on this very topic was held in London at about the time the book came out, and Verso have been publishing a series of books in the last two years devoted to discussing communism.

But it is the very terms of the title that concern me. The idea of communism. Is that what communism is — an idea? Or is it — or at least should we think of it as being — something grander? Karl Marx was in no doubt. Communism he once wrote, is the solution to the riddle of history, and furthermore knows itself to be the solution. Now that is a pretty grand concept, well above anything like a mere 'idea'.

Not that I am saying Marx was 100% right in this, by any means. And as so often with what Marx wrote, there is both argument and rhetoric entwined in his words, and we have to think our way through them. After all, everything he wrote, even the most 'scientific' of his works, were written as acts of combat, and point-scoring, telling blows, stinging attacks and the weaponry of rhetoric are always there, on the surface.

Let's take a closer look at what Tariq Ali says. He starts off by tracing the history of this 'idea of communism' from the time of the French revolution, and reminds us that by the 1830s, before young Karl had even left school, there were groups and circles committed to communism among workers, not intellectuals. Ali is reminding us here of an important fact, that communism in modern Europe originates precisely among the industrial working class, as a genuine political goal of working people. Indeed he points out that the grandmother of all communist parties, the famous League of Communists for which Marx and Engels wrote the Manifesto in 1848, was actually founded in 1830 by German tradesmen working in Paris, as the League of the Despised, later becoming the League of the Just before renaming itself the Communist League. (The titles in German are a pun; Bund der Geächteten, and then Bund der Gerechten.)

Ali's point here, in part, is that the famous opening lines of

GUERRILLA GARDENING: SEED BOMBS

Tracing its roots back to the 20th century natural farmer Masanobu Fukuoka, the practice of seed bombing has quickly evolved into the urbanite environmentalists go-to weapon for regenerating vacant lots, parking medians and other opportune spaces. Seed bombs allow you to place it where you want, for example, beans near fences and posts or to throw at your mercy.

The basic recipe for a seed bomb is 1 part powdered potter's clay to 1 part compost, add your seed of choice, and slowly add water or seaweed solution to make a dough. The size of seed will determine how much to add to the mixture as well how big to roll the bombs. Dry your bombs completely, so as to prevent the seeds from germinating prematurely in a warm, dry spot or with a dehydrator.

Then it's **BOMBS AWAY!**

*Take care to use non-invasive seeds (preferably native), and to avoid farmland and conservation areas.

the Communist Manifesto, 'A spectre is haunting Europe, the spectre of Communism,' is more than just rhetoric. It was also literally true. The European upper and middle classes were already worried about communism among the workers. Indeed, in France in that very year of 1848, there was something awfully close to a communist revolution in June; and behind the agitation for universal voting rights and annual parliaments with salaries to compensate worker parliamentarians in the British Peoples' Charter, the authorities and respectable society saw the two great fears of the propertied: expropriation of property (real) and a commonality of women (utter fantasy).

The European upper and middle classes had been worried about the spread of communism for quite some time. The savagery with which the striking weavers of Lyons were put down in 1834, when special trains from the French countryside brought peasant volunteers into Lyons so they could join in the fun of shooting down workers, was motivated precisely by this fear that demands for wages and conditions by workers were a front for a communist takeover. Indeed, the first the German public ever heard about communism in their own language was in a book on communist movements and sects, published in the early 1840s and written by a Prussian aristocrat and state official who had spent time in France, a certain Lorenz Freiherr von Stein. Ali does well to recount this history because we have become too used to seeing communism as being an idea of the intellectuals, a fad that university students eventually grow out of, and forgetting its real working-class lineage.

But once 1848, the Manifesto and Marx and Engels, partners in revolution, entered the picture, Ali's story of the idea of communism becomes the story of Marxism. And inevitably this leads him to what the bulk of the book is devoted to: an analysis of the elephant which sits in every room in which communism is discussed, the elephant being the awful actual history of every political regime and state that called itself communist in the twentieth century.

Don't let anyone get my disparaging tone wrong. This is a real problem and has to be confronted. And Ali does a good job of it. His analysis of 'what went wrong' is the fairly standard Trotsky-derived argument about the degeneration of the workers' state as a consequence of the civil war, the physical loss of the Russian working class and party cadres in the fighting, the filling up of the party and the ranks of the working class with barely educated peasants, the reversion to bureaucratic rather than democratic methods, all of this wrapped up around the figure of Stalin, the arch-bureaucrat. (I intend to discuss this interpretation in a forthcoming essay, so I won't comment on it now.)

Now, all of this is an extremely logical way to treat the history of the idea of communism. And that is precisely the problem. To follow this logical path is to not even acknowledge other parts of the story, nor even to ask other questions. And the problem starts in this very concept that communism is an 'idea', a mental construct and that people who call themselves communists are engaged in trying to realise that idea.

Now, I realise how absolutely odd that paragraph sounds and that the onus is now on me to make some sense of it. Firstly, I want to start by pointing out what has been left out of the story told here. If we study the entire sweep

Commmunism is an idea, a mental construct and that people who call themselves communist are engaged in trying to realise that idea.

of the human story, from the time anatomically modern humans appeared around 60,000 years ago, we have to acknowledge that communism has been the dominant form of social organisation for most of that time. Our

hunter-gatherer ancestors maintained this way of life until around 10,000 years ago, and many continued to maintain it after that and some still do right now. Hunter-gatherer bands were and are communist; they have no accumulations of private wealth-producing property, hence no inheritances and hence no hereditary class systems. Sure, some individuals will be prominent, influential, accorded status or deference, based on age or experience, or personality or achievements, but there are no classes. There is generally no selfishness or individualism as we understand it. Decisions are taken collectively and generally by consensus, people practise collaboration, co-operation, mutual aid, collective effort. And don't believe for a moment that these were (and are) materially, nutritionally or culturally deprived societies, or that they lived in want and hardship. That is simply not true.

Socio-biologists and evolutionary psychologists like to take the model of modern-day selfish, aggressive, grasping Anglo-American man (and it is a masculinist image) and project it back into prehistory. It is interesting that nowadays most of those arguments are conducted at the level of the behaviours that genes supposedly select for, rather than on actual archaeological or anthropological evidence, because the latter just does not support them.

For the greatest time span of human history we lived in a stage of communism, and this stage produced a good and rich life.

There are two key points I am making here. Firstly, for the greatest time span of human history we lived in a stage of communism, and this stage produced a good and rich life full of leisure, creativity and cultural fulfilment for humans (and, incidentally, probably the healthiest lifestyle ever, too), and in chronological terms has to be seen as the most successful social structure. And secondly, turning the socio-biologist arguments back on themselves, it is far more likely that over the long span of human history, genes have selected for those behaviours that we might describe as communist. The strongest argument for communism is not that it may be a beautiful or inspiring idea, but that it may be hard-wired into us. And if that is the case, the fact that modern humans are educated and socialised to act towards each other in ways that are 180 degrees contrary to our real inclinations could well go a long way towards explaining why most of us are in some way psychological and emotional screw-ups. To miss this part of the story of communism is, I think, a serious gap.

But going beyond this, admittedly reconstructed, model of prehistory, we can find living communist traditions even in post-Neolithic agricultural communities, at least at the level of village society, even when some form of tribute-taking thug class imposed itself over the top. At the micro level, most tributary, feudal, aristocratic empires, whatever you call them, continued to function in a collaborative, communal and egalitarian fashion. This is the background to the unfortunately not-so-well-known writings of old Charlie Marx on Russia, where he was quite excited at the possibility that Russia could bypass capitalism altogether and advance to communism based on the traditional peasant commune.

This form of agrarian peasant communism formed the basic social organisation of many African cultivating villages, as well as in the broad sweep of peasant cultures in east Asia. Again, to leave them out of the story is to seriously distort the story of communism into a Eurocentric story, exported to the vast mass of humanity. Indeed, I would suggest one reason why communist parties and movements had more success in so-called Third World countries than elsewhere was because this tradition of peasant communism was still alive and well in the twentieth century.

And then even within the European tradition there are noticeable gaps in the standard story that Ali tells us. Communist stories are already present in the early mythologies of the cultural traditions that were eventually woven into western culture. They are there in the myth of the Golden Age, documented in ancient Greek poetry in the works of Hesiod in the eighth century BCE. The description of Eden in Jewish stories that became the Old Testament of the Christian Bible are communistic; indeed the so-called fall of humanity is described as necessitating work to 'earn thy bread in the sweat of thine brow' — i.e. a life of endless labour; surely an excellent description of the change from the leisure of hunting and gathering to the hard labour of farming. And let us not forget the real reason the city of Sodom was destroyed — 'for they were rich and would not share with the poor'.

If we kill your mum, it'll be just a good-behaviour bond.

Elements of a tradition of redistributive economic organisation survived in the law texts of the early Jewish polity. Mosaic law made provision for a Jubilee every 50 years when all debts were cancelled, people were released from bondage and the economic clock restarted, as it were. Let us not forget that the Jewish tradition did not descend from heaven, but sprang from Mesopotamia, and that the Bible stories have their ancestral versions in the myths recorded in cuneiform literature dating back to around 3000 BCE. Here we already find mythic tales of a communist past of egalitarianism and co-operation. Powerful evidence this: right at the start of a social system of organised states involving class distinctions and inheritable accumulated wealth, people imagined (or remembered?) a different past. Communism is not a modern 'idea'; it has been there since the beginning of recorded history.

Right at the start of a social system of organised states involving class distinctions and inheritable accumulated wealth, people imagined a different past.

In terms of continuity, I suggest Ali has also left out a great deal. The foundation teachings of communism can be found in the gospels, in various recorded accounts of oral traditions of the sayings of Reb Yeshua ben Yussuf (you may know him by the Latin version of his name, Jesus). But more potently an account that survived (in the book known as *The Acts of the Apostles*) of the organisation of the community of believers that was in Jerusalem after Reb Yeshua's state-sanctioned murder, a total community of property, in which at least one member was put to death for holding back personal wealth. And it was these stories that inspired millennia of writings, movements and sects, all condemned as heretical by the established church. From the pseudo *Letter of Clement* in the eighth century, through the movements that continuously appeared and reappeared (one of which became acceptable, the Franciscans, who nevertheless came within a whisker of violent repression until a way was found to incorporate them within the church) to the incredible outburst of apocalyptic writings in fifteenth-century Germany, which prophesy class war, the destruction of wealth and the advent of a kingdom of equality, communism was equally a spectre that haunted mediaeval popes and monarchs.

And if they had been haunted, the emerging capitalist class and its friends the princes were thoroughly spooked by communism during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. At precisely the time in which capitalism was being constructed in Europe in an era of turmoil, turbulence and violence, when it came into the world in one of Marx's equally factual and equally rhetorical phrases 'dripping from head to toe in blood and gore', a remarkable series of communist movements, equally hostile to both the old feudal and the developing capitalist orders appeared. Among them was the great German uprising of peasants and the lower orders from the towns in 1524–25. Known (inaccurately) to posterity as the Great Peasants War, the popular armies actually inscribed 'For Common Property' on their banners and marched to do battle with the feudal armies of heavy cavalry and artillery. The repression was immense; somewhere in the order of 100,000 ordinary working people were killed in the summer of 1525. Every crossroads, every town gate in southern and central Europe was decorated with gallows or with men left to die of exposure with their limbs smashed by hammers while tied to wheels. The other great communist movement which inherited the traditions of mediaeval heresy was of course the Anabaptists, who, constantly expelled and constantly persecuted, tried over and over again to establish their own communal settlements, organising their lives collectively and generally responding (with one notable exception at Muenster in 1531) in a non-violent manner. Their descendants survive today as the Amish in the United States, still egalitarian and collective, but no longer holding property in common.

Communism reappeared in England in 1649 in the movement of The Diggers, with the remarkable Gerard Winstanley as the spokesperson. In Winstanley's writings we get the first theoretical writings on communist society and also on environmentalism. Winstanley was at great pains to point out how private landowners destroyed the fertility of the soil by overcropping to maximise their returns, and how under a communist collective soil fertility would be improved by manuring through the regular sequence of fallowing common lands so that all would have enough to eat. Two centuries before Marx developed his theory of the metabolic rift between city and country, it was there in embryo in Winstanley.

Communism survived the repressions of the early modern period. The link to the radicals of the French revolution is provided through the Atlantic world, where pirates established floating communist republics, and American slave uprisings (which often included participation from Irish convicts, English indentured servants and other poor labourers) freely took recourse to a biblical language of class war drawn from the Psalms, in the concept of the Jubilee and in the communist sayings of the gospels. This grassroots antinomianism by the multi-racial Atlantic proletariat of the eighteenth century came back into the European mainstream.

And then, even after the advent of modern communism, by equating it with the story of Marxism as a political movement, Ali has left out another important tale, that of anarchism. The expulsion of anarchism from the ranks of communism — a legacy of Marx himself in the First International — is, in my view, an immense tragedy. The European anarchist tradition provides us with an alternative view of communism which not only offsets the view derived from the terrible history of twentieth-century communist states, but also provides a very telling critique of the history. In this tradition, the problem is not in the deformation of a workers' state, but in the very existence of the state. Anarchist critics would point out that the repression and control of the immediate organs of workers' and people's power, the local and factory committees

known as Soviets, was in train long before the civil war ended and was an early indication of the Bolshevik intent to maintain an organised and dominant state structure, rather than moving towards a democratic transformation of state functions into functions of everyday life. And anarchist critics would show how this tragedy was to be repeated in Catalonia between 1936 and 1939.

The story of communism cannot be complete without the incorporation of the story of anarchism. But not only in its critiques. For above all else, anarchists showed themselves to be the real heirs of the long European antinomian communist tradition in the way they organised. Not for them political parties, but communal organisations, workers' syndicates, circles in which the boundaries of political and social existence were blurred and eliminated. Anarchists historically also displayed remarkable transformations in their personal lives, indeed especially in southern Europe, something like a post-'conversion experience' behaviour could be observed. The reason was that, like their millennia-old predecessors, communism for the anarchists (no matter what they called it) was about practices, about what people did and how they lived their lives. Now this is not to fall into some attempt to resurrect the utopian communism so castigated by Marx (but interestingly, less so by Engels), but to stress that communism is more than an idea, more than a political choice, but a way of living — or at least trying to live — and organise with others.

Anarchists showed themselves to be the real heirs of the of the long European antinomian communist tradition in the way they organised.

It is not possible, obviously, to build communist utopias within a capitalist society, and the political task of communists is to work to transform that society, but that task requires collective, collaborative, mutually supportive, comradely work. It requires a set of practices that in some way start to model and experiment with the kind of practices that we hope may be constitutive of both the way we wish to revolutionise and the kind of world we want to see. 'The personal is political' is a very pertinent and deeply true statement, and communism has to be more than an abstract, theoretical idea to have any traction. It must take that old 1960s slogan to heart, and incorporate it into a set of practices. And this is where the examples of the past and of other social systems become so important: they show us a set of practices. Perhaps the real tragedy of communism in the twentieth century was that so many people thought it was an idea only and they could continue living and practising their lives in the same way that denizens of capitalist society did. The failure was not the idea, but the failure to implement practices, to even understand the necessity of practices.

Communism has to be more than an abstract, theoretical idea to have any traction.

In his novel *The Comedians*, set in the Haiti of Papa Doc Duvalier in the 1960s, Graham Greene puts the following words into the mouth of the most sympathetic character in the book, a communist doctor: 'But communism, my friend, is more than Marxism … there is a mystique as well as a politique.' Exactly. A mystique. My criticism of Ali and most other writers on this topic is precisely that they miss the mystique.

What I have tried to do here, is to stress that communism is an age-old concept, and that it has always marched in lockstep with the advance of social systems based on private wealth, class rule, inequality and state violence. Communism is not a new idea, but an ancient tradition of critique, rejection and resistance to class rule. It has existed as a permanent negation of systems of privilege, injustice and inequality; a constant call to us to return to our human social roots of co-operation, collaboration, solidarity, to what Marx described as our 'species-being'. By leaving out this story, the universality and antiquity — and hence the real legitimacy — of communism is forgotten. Marx certainly had an awareness of this — hence the 'riddle of

The bombs aren't falling only in my mind.
But the walls drip with their own sense of confinement,
precluding an absolution that will never come.

Please know
the next sunset I see will pixellate on its way to my TV
because skyscrapers don't make good neighbors.

But the bombs are not only falling in my mind
they drip instead from metallic birds that frequent middle eastern skies.
Sadly not confined to digital form.

T. Roy

history' quote at the start of this essay. By forgetting that for most of this history, culminating in our often-shunned political cousins, the anarchists, we have overlooked that most people expressed their communism as much in how they tried to behave towards each other, and live their lives, as well as in their attempts — heroic, desperate, and generally tragic — to expand the space in which to live as communists. Greene's doctor goes on to say 'we are humanists'. Reducing communism to an idea is to make it mechanical, abstract, an exercise in theory. It ignores the vital component of practices, and it has led rapidly to anti-human behaviour. The long history of communism is the history of a struggle and effort to be human in the face of inhuman structures and powers. We forget the humanity at our peril.

Cedric Beidatsch

RISE UP!

Photography: ***Desire Mallet***
<desire_photography@hotmail.com>

Kitchen hand/Imp

I beg of you don't let my eyes ping open before my alarm.
6am: 3 disorientated hours sleep.
Saturday insane ... I ain't seen nothing yet Sunday.
Haven't you people got other or better things
to do than want to pile into a cafe, to
have a sense of being a sophisticated cosmopolitan,
Rather than just boil your own kettle?
Relentless dishes of Mount Cutlery ... clothes covered
in scum,
just let it douse you and move on
automaton override.

"Hey Rick"
"Hey".

Dare ask for a break, pick at customers
left-overs of wasteful consumerist disgust,
but scraps never tasted so good.

"Hey Dad"
"Hey son"

Don't stand spoons upside-down.
Burn palms, no time for pain.
Chop oranges the smell of the sun,
crush apples, "behind, behind",
stack, load, wash, dry
a viscous circle unforgiving,
this goes here that goes
there.

"Hey Rick"
"Hey"

my sense of self-worth
wanes like a ghost of flatulence
away with the dishwasher steam.

"behind behind"

Alfresco... where's 2... where's 7,
panicked, forget knives and forks and napkins,
use your fucking fingers I vex.

"Hey dad"
"Hey son"

Do not kid yourself by looking at the clock wanting to primal scream
wondering how the fuck on earth it can
only be that time but felt aeons elapse.
"He's an arse-hole but unfortunately he's your boss", really he's just an unimportant person and
a bag of water like the many
who pass by and are just another someone.
Appease but avoid. "Switch on Jnr".

I cannot clique so why do I grind
in a place that tries to act like a family to make the drudgery of needing money pass quicker or seem tolerable.

Illustration: ***Heath Kidd***

"Hey Rick"
... ...

I can see see how that would get very annoying
but silence does not always speak volumes.

"Hey Gary" even though his name's Heath, the story behind this one...
who cares,
I forget them anyway with all else to compartmentalise,
my brain might as well be on the menu, charred and chewy.
Mate, dude, man or just asking where does this and that go
is manageable. What if this time
I'm sick of saying behind I imagine
the chain of slapstick events of confined carnage.

Return home to a worse hell of facing Bob
rotting from alcoholic cancer,
and mum addicted to melancholy ... "you're not
eating in that room any more, boy" he tells me,
like he means anything to me
… or to do more dishes.

My only wish is to see them gloriously smashed
against the wall, thrown to the ground
at a Greek wedding reception, or
pummelled with a hammer in slow-motion
to flay beautiful shards of destruction
that rip through everything like dark matter.

Thomas Chandler

Avenue is printed on 100% recycled paper using dolphin-based ink.